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TWO NATIONS: TWO PERSPECTIVES

Gertrude Himmelfarb • *James Q. Wilson*

The Musical Miseducation of Youth	***Martha Bayles***
Killing off the Dying?	***Adam Wolfson***
Moral Reform—Learning from the Past	***Joel Schwartz***
The New Pork Barrel	***Pietro S. Nivola***

BOOKS IN REVIEW:

David Frum **on Martha Nussbaum**
Diana Schaub **on James W. Ceaser**
Jeremy Rabkin **on Rogers Smith**
Wilfred M. McClay **on Dinesh D'Souza**

PUBLIC INTEREST

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Democratic remedies for democratic disorders

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

A FAMOUS passage in the *Federalist Papers* calls for "a republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government." The diseases the Founding Fathers had in mind were those associated with factions: the pursuit of special interests to the detriment of the general interest. And the main remedy they proposed was federalism: the general interest to be represented in the national legislature, local and particular interests in the state legislatures.

Today, it is our democratic society, rather than our republican government, that is problematic. And the diseases incident to that society are moral and cultural rather than political: the collapse of ethical principles and habits, the loss of respect for authorities and institutions, the breakdown of the family, the decline of civility, the vulgarization of high culture, and the degradation of popular culture. Three-quarters of the people in a recent poll said that the main cause of America's problems is "moral decay."

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In their most virulent form these diseases manifest themselves in illegitimacy, crime, violence, drug addiction, illiteracy, pornography, and welfare dependency. Some of these conditions have improved in recent years, but there is little cause for complacency. If the number of births to teenagers has decreased, the proportion of out-of-wedlock births, to adults as well as teenagers, continues to increase (and this country still has the dubious distinction of having the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the industrialized world). If divorce is tapering off, it is because cohabitation is becoming so common; people living together without benefit of marriage can separate without benefit of divorce. (And do so with greater facility and frequency.) If there are fewer abortions, it is in part because illegitimacy has become more respectable. (Indeed, the term "illegitimacy" is taboo; the preferred terms in official circles are "non-marital childbearing" or "alternative mode of parenting.") If one drug falls out of favor, another takes its place; and the decline among adults is more than offset by an increase among young people—and progressively younger people. And in spite of the recent decrease of crime (which, penologists warn us, may be reversed when today's baby boomers become tomorrow's delinquents), teenage boys, regardless of race, are still more likely to die from gunshot wounds than from all natural causes combined, and homicide is the second leading cause of death for all young people and the leading cause for young blacks.

From a longer perspective, even the good news may give us pause. The decline or stabilization of some of the indices of social disarray does not begin to bring us back to the status quo ante—that now maligned period of the 1950s before the precipitous rise of those indices. With a divorce rate more than twice that of the 1950s, half of the marriages today, and well over half of the remarriages, are expected to end in divorce. Illegitimacy has increased sixfold, and the number of children living with one parent has risen from less than one-quarter to more than one-quarter. Violent crime, although considerably lower than it was only a few years ago, is still almost twice that of the 1950s. And the much heralded reduction in the percentage of families on AFDC has brought us only five times that of the 1950s to three and one-half

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times.

If some of the good news is only equivocally good, some of the bad news is unequivocally bad. The escalating violence on TV, the ready accessibility of pornography and sexual perversions on the Internet, the "dumbing down" of education at all levels, and the "defining down" of deviancy of every kind—these too are part of the social pathology of our time. And this pathology, which affects not only the "underclass" but the entire population, shows no signs of abating; on the contrary, these diseases are becoming more acute and more pervasive. Affluence and education, we have discovered, provide no immunity from moral and cultural disorders.

This situation is all the more distressing because it violates two of our most cherished assumptions: that moral progress is a necessary by-product of material progress, and that enlightened legislation will solve our social ills. The 1960s witnessed both an expanding economy and a heightened social consciousness. Yet it was precisely then (for reasons abundantly analyzed elsewhere) that the "moral statistics," as the Victorians called them, took a turn for the worse. And not only in this country but in most Western countries, which is why Vietnam is not the crucial factor it has sometimes been made out to be. If single parenthood or welfare dependency do not preoccupy most Europeans (with the notable exception of the English), this is more a reflection of the permissive ethos in those countries than of the objective conditions. And if Americans are more acutely aware of these conditions, if we perceive them as serious social problems, it is because we pride ourselves on being not only the most democratic nation but also the most moral one. ("Moralistic," our denigrators would say.) Thus we are preternaturally alert to the moral diseases incident to democratic society and anxious to find democratic remedies for those diseases.

The civil-society solution

One remedy looks to the most democratic branch of the government, the legislature, to pass laws designed to promote the moral well-being of the country (income-tax measures favoring married couples) or to nullify those laws that have contributed to our ill-being ("no-fault" divorce laws that facili-

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tate and may encourage divorce). Another remedy is the devolution of power from the federal government to state and local governments, on the theory that the latter reflect the moral temper of the people more faithfully than the remote Washington bureaucracy; this is the rationale behind the recent welfare bill making the states responsible for relief. A more radical remedy looks to the Constitution for redress—an amendment, for example, to forbid or limit abortion.

These are all efforts to find political remedies for our social and moral disorders. Recently, a non-political remedy has been proposed, to near-universal acclaim. This is the restoration and revitalization of civil society—families, communities, churches, civic and cultural societies. It is an attractive idea because it calls upon nothing more than such natural, familiar, universal institutions as families and communities. Moreover, it is preeminently a democratic idea. It is democracy on the smallest scale—the "little platoon" that Burke described as "the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections." It is also an attribute of democracy on the largest scale—Tocqueville's "voluntary associations," which have the crucial task of mediating between the individual and the state. In addition, it serves as a corrective to that other democratic flaw identified by Tocqueville: "the tyranny of the majority," the power of the collective mass of the people which may be inimical to the liberty of individuals and minorities.

Today, civil society is asked to assume yet another task: that of repairing the moral fabric of democratic society. The institutions of civil society, we are told, are the "seedbeds of virtue." It is here, in families and communities, that individual character takes shape, that children become civilized and socialized, that people acquire a sense of social as well as individual responsibility, that self-interest is reconciled with the general interest, and that civility mutes the discord of opposing wills. And all of this is achieved naturally, organically, without the artificial contrivances of government, without the passage of laws or the intrusion of bureaucracies, without recourse to the coercive, punitive power of the state.

It sounds too good to be true. And it is too good to be true. The intentions of the proponents of civil society are admirable, and today more than ever the idea of a mediating

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structure between an unrestrained individualism and an overweening state is commendable. The difficulty is that civil society—not as it once was, as Burke or Tocqueville or even our parents (or ourselves, of a certain age) knew it, but as it now is—cannot bear the burden of the charge placed upon it. Civil society has been described as an "immune system against cultural disease." But the fact is that much of civil society has been infected by the same virus that produced that disease—the ethical and cultural relativism that reduces all values, all standards, and all authority to expressions of personal will and inclination. Even the family, the traditional bedrock of civil society, has not been spared. Civil society, then, is a necessary but not a sufficient remedy for the diseases incident to democratic society.

Religion in America

When the Founding Fathers devised a "new science of politics" based upon the principle of divided powers and interests, they understood that that "science" alone was insufficient to sustain a proper republican government, that the best political arrangements were of no avail in the absence of "virtue and wisdom."

> I go on this great republican principle [Madison said], that the people will have virtue and intelligence to select men of virtue and wisdom.... To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is a chimerical idea.

Tocqueville, visiting America half a century later, found that a democracy, even more than a republic, is threatened by an egalitarianism that undermines liberty and an individualism that saps "the spring of public virtues." America's saving grace was the proliferation of the "voluntary associations" that mitigate the worst effects of democracy and maintain a sense of public virtue. And among the most important of these associations were the churches.

"The religious atmosphere of the country," Tocqueville wrote, "was the first thing that struck me on arrival in the United States." Unlike France, where the Enlightenment had seen to it that religion and freedom were "almost always marching in

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opposite directions," in America they were "intimately linked together in joint reign over the same land." It was religion in the service of virtue that made freedom possible. And American religion was uniquely able to do this because it was not an established religion. Americans cherished the idea of religious freedom, the separation of church and state, as much as they cherished their particular church or sect. Religion was "the first of their political institutions," precisely because it was not, strictly speaking, a political institution at all.

Again and again Tocqueville reflected upon the relationship of religion to morality and of both to freedom:

> While the law allows the American people to do everything, there are things which religion prevents them from imagining and forbids them to dare.

> Freedom sees religion as the companion of its struggles and triumphs, the cradle of its infancy, and the divine source of its rights. Religion is considered as the guardian of mores, and mores are regarded as the guarantee of the laws and pledge for the maintenance of freedom itself.

> Despotism may be able to do without faith, but freedom cannot. Religion is much more needed in ... [a] republic ... than in ... [a] monarchy ..., and in democratic republics most of all. How could society escape destruction if, when political ties are relaxed, moral ties are not tightened? And what can be done with a people master of itself if it is not subject to God?

Tocqueville anticipated the objection commonly heard today that this view of religion is demeaning, even irreligious, because it is concerned more with the utility of religion than with its spirituality. "I do not know," he admitted, "if all Americans have faith in their religion—for who can read the secrets of the heart?—but I am sure that they think it necessary for the maintenance of republican institutions." Every religion, he noted, has two dimensions: one that elevates the soul above the material and sensory world, and the other that imposes upon each man an obligation to mankind. These are complementary functions, and both are essential for the self-government that is at the heart of democracy.

Like Tocqueville, a visitor to the United States today may

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well be struck by the "religious atmosphere of the country." He will also be struck (again, like Tocqueville) by the conspicuous contrast between the United States and Europe. In most European countries, there is an inverse relation between religious commitment and education; the least educated tend to be the most religious. In the United States, there is a high level of both education and religion. In the United States, 43 percent attend church at least weekly; in Britain, 14 percent; in France, 12 percent; in Sweden, 4 percent. In the United States, 49 percent say that religion is very important in their lives; in Britain, 17 percent; in France, 10 percent; in Sweden, 8 percent. The French press was startled recently by the million or so young people who flooded Paris to hear the Pope celebrate Mass. But only half of French youth even call themselves Catholic (compared with almost 90 percent who did so three decades ago), and fewer than half of these practise their faith. At a conference in Prague about the same time, the President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, defined the central problem of our time as "global atheism" and called for a revival of those values and principles that all religions hold in common.

America is notably exempt from that "global atheism." "The churching of America," as sociologists call it, is reflected in a variety of statistics, some almost incredible. A staggering 96 percent of Americans profess to believe in God or a "universal spirit" and 90 percent in heaven. (In good American fashion, only 65 percent believe in the devil and 73 percent in hell.) Sixty-seven percent identify themselves as members of a church; 60 percent say they attend church at least once a month, and 43 percent that they had attended in the previous week; 90 percent say that they pray at least once a week and 75 percent daily. With only small variations, these statistics hold for the better-educated and less-educated, for the rich and the poor. Indeed, those earning more than $75,000 a year are more likely to have attended religious services in the previous week than those earning less than $15,000. It may well be that people are reporting what they think they ought to be doing rather than what they actually do. But this too is significant, reflecting values that are believed in even though they may not be observed in practice.

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Other statistics demonstrate the social effects of religious affiliation and observance. The practice of religion has a high correlation with family stability, communal activity, and charitable contributions; and a low correlation with suicide, depression, drug addiction, alcoholism, and crime. Black Protestants and white Catholics, with similarly high church attendance, have similarly low divorce rates. Those who seldom or never attend church have seven times the cohabitation rate of those who do. (This spills over into the following generation; children whose mothers frequently attend services are half as likely to cohabit as adults than those whose mothers are not church-goers.) Not "safe sex" but the regular practice of religion is one of the most important factors in preventing out-of-wedlock births. Religion has even been shown to be conducive to physical well-being. Regular church attendance is correlated with lower mortality rates from heart, liver, and lung diseases. Older adults who attend church regularly are twice as likely to have strong immune systems as those who do not.

An ethics gap

These comforting statistics about religion would seem to be at odds with the discomforting ones about our social and moral condition. If religion is so important in America, and if it seems to have such positive effects, why is the country in the state of moral decay reported by so many people?

The anomaly may be accounted for, in large part, by the changing character of the mainline churches, so that religious attendance or prayer are no longer reliable indicators of cultural and moral dispositions. Tocqueville, living in a less secular, less permissive age, could assume that "each sect worships God in its own fashion, but all preach the same morality in the name of God." That is no longer the case. The churches do not preach the same morality; some do not presume to preach any morality. Many ministers happily preside over marriage services where the pledge of "until death do us part" has been replaced by the new dispensation, "for as long as we both shall love."

One pollster speaks of an "ethics gap" between religious faith and religious practices. More to the point is the gap between religious faith and moral practices. Thus Episcopa-

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lians tend to be liberal and latitudinarian in their social attitudes as well as in their theology, whereas Evangelicals and Mormons are typically fundamentalist in theology and traditionalist in morality. (The violent crime rate in Utah, which has the largest Mormon population, is less than half that of the United States.)

The ethics gap cuts through religions and denominations. Southern and Northern Baptists differ sharply not only on such subjects as the ordination of women and homosexuals but on cultural and moral values in general. And among Southern Baptists themselves the disagreements are severe enough to have very nearly caused a schism in recent years. Some Reform Jews regard marriage with an Orthodox Jew almost as a species of intermarriage, and would actually prefer their child to marry a non-Jew who shares their values rather than an Orthodox Jew who does not. Traditionalist Catholics are at odds with modernists. Even on the subject of abortion, where one might expect agreement, the rift is significant, with little more than a third of modernist Catholics subscribing to a pro-life position. And Protestants allied with the Christian Coalition have as little in common with those in the National Council of Churches as they do with secularists or atheists; indeed, they may be better disposed to the latter because they do not contaminate the well of religion and morality.

The religious revival we are now experiencing is not only—perhaps not so much—a religious revival as a moral revival. This is not to deny or belittle its religious impulse, only to recognize its ethical as well as spiritual character. (The resemblance to the Wesleyan movement in the eighteenth century, which also had a strong ethical component, is striking; even today's televised gospel meetings recall Wesley's open-air meetings.) It is significant that the revival has not affected the mainline churches. On the contrary, as the evangelicals have doubled in size and the Mormons have quadrupled, the mainline churches have declined by a fourth.

The revival, which has no parallel abroad, may well bewilder a foreign visitor. It is even bewildering to those Americans who have no strong religious convictions and are fearful of the intrusion, as they see it, of religion in the public sphere. It is especially disconcerting to those academics who believe

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religiosity to be obsolete. Peter Berger and others have long since refuted the idea that modernization necessarily implies secularization. But intellectual habits die hard in the academy, and that theory has persisted, perhaps because it is congenial to the secular disposition of most professors. Even some professors who loudly deplore the decline of civic virtue and call for a restoration of civil society do not look to religion for the recovery of virtue or to the churches for the revitalization of society.

Journalists, who are also disproportionately liberal in politics and secular in belief, are no less dismissive of religion. A few years ago, a front page story in the *Washington Post* described evangelicals as "poor, uneducated, and easy to command." Protests from readers obliged the *Post* to retract that statement. But the media continue to report upon the religious revival *de haut en bas*, as if describing the antics of some barbarian tribe.

Two nations

This suggests a larger "ethics gap" in our society—a gap serious enough to warrant a revival of the term "two nations." Only a few years after Tocqueville completed his *Democracy in America*, Disraeli, in his novel *Sybil*, described the very different society of England, an England that comprised not one but two nations.

> Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.

Disraeli's two nations were "the rich and the poor." The two nations in America today are distinguished neither by money nor by class. Nor are they the two racially divided nations described by Andrew Hacker in his 1992 book, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*. Nor are they the two nations within the black community, the elites and underclass, identified by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in his 1995 book, *Two Nations ... Both Black*.

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The distinctive features of our two nations are ethos and culture rather than class, race, or ethnicity. Jean Jaurès, the French socialist and member of the Chamber of Deputies early in this century, is reputed to have said: "There is more in common between two parliamentarians, one of whom is a socialist, than between two socialists, one of whom is a parliamentarian." So, an American might now say, there is more in common between two church-going families, one of which is working-class, than between two working-class families, only one of which is church-going; or between two two-parent families, one of which is black, than between two black families, only one of which has two parents. (The statistics support this: Blacks and whites who grew up with two parents have low crime rates; blacks and whites who grew up in broken homes have high crime rates.)

The two-nations divide runs through race, religion, ethnicity, class, party, and sex. It is because their identity is defined primarily by moral and cultural values that many inner-city black parents send their children to Catholic schools, not because they themselves are Catholic (they often are not), but because they want their children to have a more rigorous education in a more disciplined environment than is available in the public schools. For the same reason, some non-observant Jews send their children to Jewish day schools rather than public or even secular private schools.

The divide makes for strange bedfellows. Some Orthodox Jews are finding, to their surprise, that they have more in common with Protestant fundamentalists and Catholic traditionalists (on such subjects as school vouchers, gay marriage, or sex-education in the schools) than with their brethren in the Reform or even Conservative denominations. And the old animosity between Catholics and Protestants is giving way to a sense of common cause between traditionalists in both religions. It is not unusual to find, at a conference of the Christian Coalition, an Orthodox rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a black Baptist preacher sharing the head table with evangelicals. The Christian Coalition itself has spawned a Catholic Alliance that is committed to the same social and moral values. James Davison Hunter refers to the "pragmatic alliances being formed across faith traditions," with cultural conservatives pitted against

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progressivists. Others speak of a shift from "ethnocultural" to "ideological" coalitions, leading to "cross-tradition alliances" of liberals against conservatives.

As religious alliances are reconstituting themselves on moral and cultural grounds, racial segregation is also breaking down. In the past, only liberal denominations were integrated. Now conservative ones are as well, with white Southern Baptist churches beginning to open their doors to blacks, and evangelical organizations endorsing the principle of "racial reconciliation." Political affiliations have undergone similar realignments. It was the state of the culture, not "the economy, stupid," that prompted many working-class Democrats to switch their lifelong allegiances and vote for Reagan in 1980. And the voting patterns in 1996 show a division not between Protestants and Catholics but between traditionalists and modernists in both religions.

The two-nations image was surely overdramatized by Disraeli and can easily be exaggerated today. Then, as now, a large part of the population falls somewhere between those two nations. Yet that image did illuminate an essential aspect of early-Victorian England. And it does help explain the peculiar, almost schizoid nature of our present condition: the sense of moral disarray on the one hand, and the visible, even dramatic evidence of a moral-cum-religious revival on the other. This disjunction is apparent in small matters and large—in the fact, for example, that gangsta rap and gospel rock are each among today's fastest growing forms of music. Or that, amid all the evidence of family breakdown, we also have the Promise Keepers, the half million men who assembled in Washington for a day of prayer and atonement, pledging themselves to Christian observance, marital fidelity, and familial responsibility. (In local meetings of fifty thousand or so, they pay for the privilege of participating in these demonstrations.)

The moral polarization of society is most conspicuous in such hotly disputed issues as school vouchers, prayer in public schools, partial-birth abortions, pornography on the Internet, or homosexuality and adultery in the military. But it has larger ramifications, affecting beliefs, attitudes, and values on a host of subjects ranging from private morality to public policy. It is, in fact, more profoundly divisive than the class polarization

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that Marxists looked to as the precondition for their revolution.

The counterculture

Having been spared a class revolution, we have finally succumbed to the cultural revolution. What was, only a few decades ago, a sub-culture or counterculture in society is now the dominant culture. For some time conservatives resisted acknowledging this, convinced that "the people" were still "sound," still devoted to traditional values, and that only superficially and intermittently were they (or more often their children) seduced by the blandishments of the counterculture. That confidence has eroded, as surely as the values themselves have. By now, it is evident that the counterculture of yesteryear is the dominant culture today. "Alternative life styles" that only a few decades ago were frowned upon by polite society are now not only tolerated but given equal status with traditional life styles. An "adversary culture" once confined to artists (and artists-manqués known as "bohemians") has been democratized and popularized. Family values once taken for granted are now, if not derided as "bourgeois values," then widely ignored and violated with impunity.

Like all cultures, the dominant culture today exhibits a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices. At one end is the "elite culture," as it has been called, represented by the media and academia. Statistics confirm what we all know, that the views of the media and academia are consistently more permissive and "progressive" than those of the public. Thus only a third of the public, but 90 percent in the media, support the right to abortion without qualifications. Or well over half of the public, but only 5 percent of leading filmmakers, say that they attend church at least once a month. Or more than three-quarters of the public, but fewer than half in the media, say that adultery is always wrong. (Both adultery and promiscuity are portrayed frequently and sympathetically in films and television. The favorable portrayals of casual sex on TV outnumber the unfavorable by 20 to one). The story of the professor who says that he cannot understand how Reagan could have been elected, when he knows no one who voted for him, is not at all apocryphal; I have had that said to me in

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almost exactly those words on more than one occasion.

But the elites are only a part, if a most visible and influential part, of this culture. The bulk of the people are acquiescent and passive. Even when they express conservative views on some subjects, they do not feel strongly enough to take a vigorous or consistent stand on them. They believe in God, but they believe even more in the autonomy of the individual. They say that one cannot legislate morality, but what they mean is that one should not adjudicate morality. They find it difficult to judge what is moral or immoral even for themselves, still more for others. Thus they take refuge in such circumlocutions as "Who is to say...?" or "Personally, I oppose abortion, but...."

Most people have misgivings about "sexually active" teenagers, and with good reason; according to a recent survey, one-fifth of 15-year-olds and one-half of 17-year-olds have had sex, many on frequent occasions and with multiple partners. But the same people tend to be tolerant of sexually active college students and adults. Only one-quarter think that premarital sex is always wrong, and two-fifths, that it is not wrong at all. Almost half of parents with young children say that their primary goal is to raise a moral child, compared with over a third who give priority to the happiness of the child. But what they mean by morality is not specified in the poll, and probably not clear to themselves. Nearly everyone professes to believe in "family values," but the concept of the family has radically changed. It is not only sociologists who define the "postmodern family" as almost any combination or permutation of members; some dismiss the very idea of "family" (encapsulated in quotation marks) as having no objective meaning at all. More significant is the fact that almost three-quarters of the public reject the traditional (and until recently legal) concept of family as people related by blood, marriage, or adoption, in favor of the expansive notion of "a group of people who love and care for each other."

The counter-counterculture

If the dominant nation expresses the values of what was once the counterculture, the "other" nation may be said to represent a counter-counterculture. Here too, one finds a spec-

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trum of beliefs and behavior, ranging from a rigid adherence to traditional values only occasionally violated in practice, to a somewhat more lenient set of values more often violated. But even the laxer members of this other nation are more assured in their values and less diffident about expressing them than their counterparts in the dominant nation. "Who am I to say...?" and "Personally ... but" are not in their lexicon.

At one end of the spectrum of this other nation (paralleling the cultural elite of the dominant nation) is the "religious right." This is the hard core of the other nation—a determined and articulate group of evangelical Protestants. In a recent survey, 18 percent of the public identified themselves under this label. Yet even they are not homogeneous either in theology or politics; they vary in the degree of their fundamentalism and conservatism. Forty-three percent of the public describe themselves as "born-again" Christians, but only one-third of these associate themselves with the religious right. The other nation, then, extends well beyond the religious right. It includes traditionalist Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, some Orthodox Jews (the latter a very small number proportionately), and individuals of no particular religious affiliation but of strong traditional moral convictions.

Although this other nation is an important and often vocal presence in the polity (neither party can ignore it with impunity), it is a minority of the population. A recent survey of the "political culture" (in which moral attitudes and issues loom large) produced a typology of six categories: the two traditional groups ("traditionalists" and "neo-traditionalists") constituting 27 percent of the population, the two liberal ones ("communitarians" and "permissivists") 46 percent, and the two intermediate, moderate ones ("pragmatists" and "conventionalists") 29 percent. The other nation is clearly outweighed numerically. As a result, it labors under the disadvantage of being perennially on the defensive. Its elite—gospel preachers, radio talk-show hosts, a few prominent columnists, and organizational leaders—cannot begin to match that of the dominant nation occupying the commanding heights of the culture: the professors who preside over a multitude of young people who have to attend their lectures, read their books, and pass their examinations; the journalists who determine what infor-

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mation, and what "spins" on that information, come to the public; the television and movie producers who provide the images, models, and values that shape the popular culture; the corporate leaders who willingly produce whatever the public will buy, indeed, are ingenious in creating a market for new and ever more meretricious products. An occasional boycott by the religious right of the Disney enterprises can hardly counteract the cumulative, pervasive effect of the dominant culture.

Backlash

Yet as the dominant elite becomes more audacious in defying conventional values—"pushing the envelope," as is said—it risks provoking a reaction on the part of an otherwise acquiescent public. Even those who have been long inured to such excesses may be repelled by the latest TV serial that is acclaimed as "push[ing] the limits of network television" and "stretching the acceptable"—that is, setting new standards of violence, profanity, and prurience; or by the new game on the Internet by the creators of "Sesame Street," which has the dual distinction of being one of the goriest yet produced and a tremendous commercial success; or by the Pulitzer-prize-winning drama celebrating not so much homosexuality as pornography and obscenity; or by the "Distinguished Professor" who flaunts her sexual relations with her students as a higher form of scholarship and pedagogy.

Some professors are beginning to complain that their students are resisting the prevailing academic fashions and are becoming conservative—career-minded, they contemptuously call it—and even religious. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reports upon a surge of religious activities on college campuses. And pollsters tell us that half of teenagers attend church, and an increasing number do so of their own accord rather than because of pressure from their parents. Young people are also becoming less enchanted with their sexual liberation. In the past few years, the number of college freshmen who believe abortion should be legal declined from 65 percent to 56 percent, and those who approve of casual sex from 51 percent to 42 percent. This tendency cuts across class lines: 83 percent of inner-city high-school juniors and seniors,

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asked about the ideal age to have sex, gave an age older than that when they themselves had had sex.

Their elders are also reconsidering the sexual permissiveness of their own youth. More than half of those who now say that premarital sex is always wrong had themselves had sex before marriage; and a fourth of those who say that sex for a young teenager is always wrong had had sex at that young age. Twenty-five years ago, one-seventh of those in their twenties said that premarital sex was always wrong; today, one-fourth of that generation (now in their forties) believe it is always wrong. At that time, one-third of the twenty-somethings thought divorce should be more difficult to obtain; today, almost half of those in their forties do (and somewhat less than half of those now in their twenties).

The dominant ethos, then, is still dominant, but a reaction against it is growing—among young people who will shape the culture of the future, and among their elders who have personally experienced the effects of a revolution that promised liberation and brought, all too often, grief and disaster.

Alternative measures

Historians have not been notably successful in predicting the future. They are not even, as some wit has said, very good at predicting the past. Some observers of the religious revival predicted the demise of religion when the Moral Majority disbanded in the late 1980s. They were woefully wrong. More recently, others have predicted a new religious "Awakening" that would transform the ethos and culture of the United States as did the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have more modest expectations. I think the religious-cum-moral revival will continue to invigorate the other nation, without succeeding in converting the dominant nation. It will however, serve the vital function of keeping alive an alternative ethos and culture—an alternative that will not necessarily have a religious character.

Those who urge us to be tolerant of "alternative life styles"—and not only to be tolerant of them but to give them full credence and legitimacy—have in mind such life styles as single-parent families, gay marriages, or cohabitation and procreation without benefit of marriage. But there are other alterna-

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tives, traditional life styles, that are reasserting themselves within that other nation and even beginning to be reflected in public policies.

The welfare bill, for example, is not merely an alternative way of administering welfare. It is an attempt to promote an alternative ethos, a new attitude toward dependency and all the ills associated with it. Critics say that the reform has not yet had a measurable effect on out-of-wedlock births. But it does represent a significant change in public opinion, which (if the reform is sustained) will eventually be reflected in the statistics. In the meantime, it has succeeded in reducing the relief rolls and, more important, in inspiring a new appreciation for what was once derided (in some circles, is still derided) as the "bourgeois work ethic." A poll of women on welfare in New Jersey, which has a "family cap" policy denying additional benefits for new births to mothers already on the relief rolls, showed two-thirds of them judging the policy to be fair and more than four-fifths praising it for promoting responsibility; only one-half said that it hurt children, and one-third that it interfered with a woman's right to have a baby.

Other alternatives are the charter schools and voucher system, which enable poor parents to do what the rich have always done—send their children to the school of their choice. Still another is the "covenant marriage" instituted by Louisiana, according to which couples forfeit their right to no-fault divorce and agree to a more binding marriage contract. Implicit in both cases is the recognition that the dominant culture will not soon be changed; the public school system is not likely to be significantly reformed in the near future, and the no-fault divorce law is not about to be repealed. But the alternatives are important not only because they make available other modes of education and marriage, but also because these modes have been legitimized and institutionalized by the state.

Some alternatives do not require the intervention of the state. They require only that the state forbear from intervening. Private schools, and especially religious schools, have long been available, but are now far more numerous than they have ever been, in the suburbs as well as inner cities and

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appealing to all classes and races. (Jewish day schools now cut across denominational lines; the largest number are still Orthodox, but they are being joined by non-denominational ones that include adherents of the Conservative and even Reform movements.)

A more radical alternative is home schooling; it is estimated that a million or more children are now being educated at home. This movement has advanced to the point where a new two-year college is being planned especially for home schoolers. Analagous to home schooling is the "TV-free" home. At a time when television is becoming increasingly intrusive and aggressive, more and more parents are making the deliberate decision not to have television in their homes. Two million households, most of them with children, now practice this kind of "cultural abstinence"—yet another means by which the other nation voluntarily opts out of the dominant culture.

Internal exiles?

This other nation, then, is not a cure for the diseases incident to a democratic society, but it is a way of containing and mitigating those diseases. Moreover, it does so in an eminently democratic fashion, consistent with the original Federalists who assumed that virtue—and religion of sorts, if only of the deist sort—was a necessary attribute of the citizens of a large republic, although not a direct or primary responsibility of the government. The other nation, reconciled to its minority status in what is now a very large and varied republic indeed, has no ambitions to impose its values upon others; it only seeks to promote and protect those values for itself. It does not want to alter the constitutional arrangements separating church and state, but only resists the efforts of the courts to go beyond that separatism by creating a hostile environment for religion as such. Nor does it desire a more active role for government than that which has been traditional in America until very recently, as exemplified in the principle of community standards applied to pornography. More often than not, restoring traditional practices means favoring a less intrusive government (as in the matter of sex-education).

The other nation is self-selecting and self-sustaining. It is not, however, entirely self-sufficient. Even within this other

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nation, there is no guarantee of immunity from the diseases afflicting society; the dominant culture is too pervasive and powerful. Nor would it be desirable to immunize this other nation entirely, even if that were possible. The dominant culture has too much of value to warrant the kind of segregation or quarantine that would require. Opting out of the culture is hardly an ideal solution. School vouchers and home schooling are defensive measures, a last resort against a seriously flawed public school system that was once the pride of our democracy. So, too, gated and segregated communities are understandable but unfortunate expediencies in a country that values openness and mobility. The parents of TV-deprived children have good reason to worry about the "forbidden fruit" syndrome. And even covenant marriages have unwitting side-effects. The requirement of premarital counseling, like prenuptial contracts, may induce a premature sense of doubt and uncertainty where there should be confidence and security. And any alternative form of marriage makes the conventional one seem even more precarious, an open invitation to divorce.

TV "abstainers" have been called "a band of internal exiles." It would be regrettable if the other nation were reduced to that lowly status. One can only hope that eventually the diseases will run their course, and the nations will, more or less, reunite. This is, after all, what happened in Disraeli's time, when industrialism and education gradually diminished the gap between rich and poor, so that by the end of the nineteenth century they had become mere classes rather than distinctive nations. It is not unreasonable to suppose that our own two nations will evolve in the same fashion. And it is very much the desire of the other nation that this happen. A 1996 survey conducted by the Roper Organization finds that the supporters of the Christian Right are "among the most unwavering in their commitment to the American political system." Forty-eight percent score high in "respect for the political institutions in America," compared with one-third of the general population; 71 percent take pride in living "under our political system," compared with 61 percent of the whole; 68 percent feel strongly that "our system of government is the best possible system," compared with 53 percent of the whole; and 85 percent "support our system of government," com-

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pared with 65 percent of the whole. They are disaffected, to be sure, with the present condition of the political culture, but entirely loyal to America as a country, a creed, and a polity—a single nation.

A moral majority

The example of Victorian England emboldens me to make another prediction. There too the religious revival, inspired by the Methodists and Evangelicals, had from its inception a strong moral impulse. And there, in the course of the nineteenth century, the moral part of that revival gradually overshadowed the religious part, so that by the end of the century, the moral-reformation movement counted among its followers not only Methodists and Evangelicals but also high-church Anglicans, Catholics, dissenters of every denomination, and, not least, a good body of secularists.

This is already becoming evident in the United States. As religious groups begin to feel more self-confident and less beleaguered, they will shed some of their sectarianism and intransigence. This is already occurring; witness, for example, the shift in tactics from a constitutional amendment reversing *Roe v. Wade* to a policy designed to chip away at abortion incrementally. They will also become more hospitable to those secularists who share their values. Indeed, this was anticipated 20 years ago, when the Christian Right associated itself with the secular New Right. It was then that Jerry Falwell, inaugurating what he optimistically called the Moral Majority, defined it as including "fundamentalists, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and persons of no particular religious convictions at all who believe in the moral principles we espouse."

It is in this latitudinarian sense that the Moral Majority might become just that—a majority of Americans of all religious creeds, and of none, sharing a common ethos. By then, too, the religious element may have become so attenuated that historians will have to remind their contemporaries (as we have been reminded in our own time) that they are living off the religious capital of a previous generation, and that that capital is being perilously depleted. Society may then find

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itself caught up in yet another cycle of de-moralization and re-moralization, including, perhaps, another Great Awakening.

But such prophecies take us far into the future. For the moment, let us be content with the knowledge that the two nations can live together in the present (as they did in early-Victorian England) with some degree of tension and dissension but without civil strife or anarchy. And (recalling the example of late-Victorian England) we may even look forward to something like a reconciliation of the two nations—at the very least, to an abatement of the diseases incident to democratic society.

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Human remedies for social disorders

JAMES Q. WILSON

WE LIVE in a nation confident of its wealth and proud of its power, yet convinced that this wealth cannot prevent, and this power cannot touch, a profound corrosion of our cultural soul. We are materially better off than our parents but spiritually worse off.

The poorest Americans today live a better life than all but the richest persons a hundred years ago. But despite this great wealth, we inhabit, as Disraeli said a century ago, "two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets." The two nations of which he wrote were the rich and the poor. But because of our great production and more even distribution of wealth, the principle on which our nation is divided has changed. Our money, our

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generosity, and our public spending have left us still with two nations, but separated by law and custom more than by wealth or favor. As Disraeli said, these worlds are "ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws."

The American sociologist Elijah Anderson has put the matter more bluntly: In our big cities, the middle class, both white and black, thinks of itself as the outcome of the great tradition of Western culture, but nearby, there is a second culture of young, marginally employed, sexually adventuresome, socially aggressive young men who reject the hard work and social conformity that made their elders successful. For some, decent jobs are hard to find, but for at least as many, the effort to find and hold such jobs as exist has disappeared.

In one nation, a child, raised by two parents, acquires an education, a job, a spouse, and a home kept separate from crime and disorder by distance, fences, or guards. In the other nation, a child is raised by an unwed girl, lives in a neighborhood filled with many sexual men but few committed fathers, and finds gang life to be necessary for self-protection and valuable for self-advancement. In the first nation, children look to the future and believe that they control what place they will occupy in it; in the second, they live for the moment and think that fate, not plans, will shape their lives. In both nations, harms occur, but in the second they proliferate—child abuse and drug abuse, gang violence and personal criminality, economic dependency and continued illegitimacy.

The family problem

For decades, our society has tried to make one nation out of two by changing everything—except the family. We have transferred money from the young to the old to make retirement easier and from rich to poor to make poverty bearable. Congress has devised community action, built public housing, created the Job Corps, distributed Food Stamps, given federal funds to low-income schools, supported job training, and provided cash grants to working families. States have created new approaches to reducing welfare rolls, and bureaucrats have designed affirmative-action programs. Yet we are still two nations.

Consider our efforts to rebuild families by training mothers

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to finish school and get jobs. When the programs were evaluated, not much had happened. The effect on the mothers was modest. Most stayed on welfare, and new pregnancies were not reduced. Even tougher programs have slight effects. When one state imposed a two-year time limit on welfare, there was a small increase in employment but no reduction in welfare payments.

Our frequent bursts of good intentions have had little discernible effect on the central problems of our time. Bastardy has become more common, children more criminal, and marriages less secure. Much has happened, but little has changed. The rate at which teenage girls produced out-of-wedlock births was 13 percent in 1950, 30 percent in 1970, 67 percent in 1990, and 76 percent in 1994.

The family problem lies at the heart of the emergence of two nations. We wish people to work and to learn more in school. But there have been times in our history when unemployment was high and public schools barely existed. Yet, in those days, we were not two culturally opposed nations. Boys did not carry guns on the street; people were not shot to get expensive sneakers; drugs did not dominate our urban life; and students who had gone to school could actually read and write. Today, we are vastly richer, but the money has not purchased public safety, racial comity, or educational achievement.

The reason, I think, is clear: It is not money but the family that is the foundation of public life. As it has become weaker, every structure built upon that foundation has become weaker. When our cultural framework is sagging, the foundation must first be fixed.

The evidence concerning the powerful effect of this familial foundation is now so strong that even some sociologists believe it. Children in one-parent families, compared to those in two-parent ones, are twice as likely to drop out of school. Boys in one-parent families are much more likely than those in two-parent ones to be both out of school and out of work. Girls in one-parent families are twice as likely as those in two-parent ones to have an out-of-wedlock birth. These differences are not explained by income. Children in one-parent families are much worse off than those in two-parent families

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even when both families have the same earnings.

When the Department of Health and Human Services studied some thirty thousand American households, it found that for whites, blacks, and Hispanics of every income level save the very highest, children raised in single-family homes were more likely to be suspended from school, to have emotional problems, and to behave badly. Another study showed that white children of an unmarried woman were much more likely than those in a two-parent family to become delinquents, even after controlling for income.

There is little point in dwelling on these facts; almost every American already understands them. Perhaps because of this understanding, the 1996 Welfare Reform Act is popular. But it is not obvious why our fears about families should make that law seem a solution. If implemented as intended, it will force young mothers to work, taking them away from their children for much of each week. These children, already fatherless, will now not even be raised by their mothers.

But though changing welfare is popular, stigmatizing illegitimacy is not. Over half the public, and 70 percent of those under age 35, think that no shame should attach to having an out-of-wedlock child. The stigma that once constrained bastardy has all but disappeared. Because of this, no one should be surprised that no matter how public policy has changed and the business cycle has moved, illegitimacy in the last three decades has increased.

William Galston, a former domestic policy advisor to President Clinton and currently a professor at the University of Maryland, has pointed out that you need only do three things to avoid poverty in this country—finish high school, marry before having a child, and produce the child after the age of 20. Only 8 percent of children from families who do this are poor; 79 percent of children from families who fail to do this are poor.

Early start

What is to be done? Social science, which for decades denied the importance of the family, may now have a partial answer. Everything we have learned in the last decade about the future of children suggests that the course is largely set in

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the earliest years. I doubt that many parents would disagree. If you wish to make a lasting difference in a child's life, start very early and intervene massively. So popular has this idea become that it has been the subject of television specials and White House pronouncements. The results of these enthusiasms have so far been quite modest. But if early family life is crucial, little will result from installing V-chips in television sets or giving tuition tax credits to the families of college students.

Let us begin with a few fundamentals. Children are not raised by programs, governments, or villages; they are raised by two parents who are fervently, even irrationally, devoted to their children's well-being. Though the benefits of two parents are beyond dispute, many children—in some communities, most children—are raised by one parent.

There is, however, evidence that early, intensive intervention can help even the children of single moms. It comes from small, experimental programs that have been competently evaluated. In Ypsilanti, Michigan, the Perry Preschool Project increased the chances that low-income children of welfare mothers would graduate from high school, gain employment, and avoid teen pregnancies and criminality. In North Carolina, the Abecedarian Project found that poor children who received infant day care and family aid services did better in school tests. These programs are much more intensive than what typically occurs in Project Head Start. In general, they involve both child care, parent training, and home visitations. We are not certain why they are effective or for what kinds of children they are most effective. There are indications that they work best for the most disadvantaged children and least well for better-off ones.

We are also uncertain whether one feature of these programs, infant day care, helps or hurts every child. The most recent studies suggest that day care does not overall weaken the attachment between mother and child. But there is evidence that if the mother is doing a poor job of raising the child, some forms of day care may make matters worse.

We don't know whether programs that were successful in the 1960s or 1970s will be equally successful today in cities that have been devastated by drug abuse and gang warfare.

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And we don't know whether large-scale efforts will produce the same gains as small-scale experiments.

But even after allowing for what we don't know, the striking feature of the best of these small programs is that they produced large and lasting effects on children. They do not make children brighter, but they make them nicer. They may do this by forging stronger bonds to parents or inculcating a greater confidence in the future. And they do so more effectively than almost any program that tries to change grown children by altering their school experience, providing them with counseling, or sending them to special training programs.

Social science has also begun to suggest that religion, a subject that social scientists are notoriously reluctant to touch, has a significant effect, independent of economic status, in keeping children out of trouble. Evidence has begun to accumulate that in the inner city, church-going males are less likely to commit crimes than are others of the same economic status. There is evidence, suggestive though not yet conclusive, that religious programs in prison reduce criminal recidivism for prison inmates more than what one would find among similar inmates in the same prison. We do not know whether fostering religion in a child or supporting the youth-saving work of churches will produce the same effects that we now observe in the simple connection between religiosity and decency. But religiosity and decency are correlated; in time, we may learn that the former causes the latter.

Five reform proposals

Let me suggest five things that might be done to enhance family life and thereby reduce the size of the underclass. Each idea is directed at one critical step in family life.

1. The newborn child. Infants of unmarried mothers require a home and truly adult care. Suppose that unmarried teenage mothers and their babies were required to live in a home under the supervision of experienced mothers. Some supervisors might be the mother's own mother, but many would not be because the mother's neglect has fostered the daughter's willingness to produce an illegitimate child. These young mothers would live in homes paid for with public funds but managed by private groups. No alcohol or drugs would be allowed.

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Boyfriends could only visit during approved hours. Every mother would attend school. Teaching effective child care to the mother would be the central goal; staying off the street would be the central constraint. We would aim at teaching not self-esteem but self-respect.

A version of this idea now operates in Massachusetts. Called the Teen Living Program, it enrolls 120 teenage mothers in small residential homes. One is run by the Salvation Army, others by the YWCA, and another by the Crittenton Association. A girl can enter in the third trimester of her pregnancy. The average entering girl is 15; the average age of a child in it is two years. The girls can leave when they are 18 and claim regular welfare benefits, but if they leave before they are 18, no such benefits are available. While in the program, the young mothers pay into the homes a portion of their welfare benefits and all of their food stamps.

The young mothers are selected because their own mothers cannot provide suitable shelters owing to child abuse, drug problems, or the like. Most fathers are older than the girls, and they rarely visit. Some of the girls don't like the rules and leave these homes, but others stay to the limit and come back as alumni. The homes teach girls how to be mothers, how to deal effectively with other people, why it is important to get an education, and how to cope with the temptation of drugs.

The program costs $38,000 per mother, and because the program is new, we don't know whether it makes a difference. These two facts—high costs and unknown results—would doom the program for policy wonks. But it has one great attraction: It directs our energies at infants in the critical years of their lives, when a chance—perhaps the best chance, possibly the only chance—exists to save them from a life of abuse and dependency that they would otherwise inherit.

2. Adoption. There are more parents seeking an adopted child than there are children to be adopted. Research shows that adoptive parents do a better job in raising children than do foster parents. Yet foster care survives, at high cost, while adoption languishes. The reason is the usual combination of bureaucratic inertia and misguided ideology. Most social-service bureaucrats have no incentive to place an abandoned child with adoptive parents quickly; many are devoted to the

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discredited doctrine of family preservation at all costs; some oppose transracial adoptions.

Foster care—which in many states costs over $17,000 a year per child—makes little sense. And a good thing, too. The average foster child lives with three different families, and 10 or more placements are not rare. Children do this to escape natural parents who are criminals, drug users, or child abusers. Meanwhile, thousands of American parents try to adopt children from abroad in order to avoid the miasmic sloth in which domestic adoptions are sunk.

There is an alternative, and Kansas has embraced it. It contracts with private firms to manage child care under a fixed price model that gives each firm a powerful incentive either to restore the child to its natural parents or to find an adoptive home, and to do it quickly.

3. The child just before school. If the lessons of the Perry Preschool Project can be generalized to many children, some combination of day care and home visitations may produce the same lasting benefits. We ought to find out.

4. Parents who are married. Many need or want to combine a career with a child. To help, I suggest a plan designed by Richard and Grandon Gill. It would offer to a parent (typically, a mother) who wished to work the equivalent of the G.I. Bill of Rights. If you postpone your career and care for the child first—at least until he reaches school age—you will receive an educational benefit. It would enable you to finish high school, or attend college or graduate school, or take technical training courses. People—chiefly, mothers—would be paid a public subsidy for discharging a vital social function. The gains to the recipient's earning powers which flow from greater education would partially compensate the economy—and through higher taxes, the government—for the cost of the subsidy.

5. Restoring the force of religion. Religion, independent of social class, reduces deviance. It lies at the heart of programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, an extraordinary success that no government could have produced and no business could have sold. Hundreds of churches and synagogues across the country already try to produce better people out of discarded humans. Many provide aid to unmarried mothers, picket crack houses, recruit boys into anti-crime activities, and re-

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quire men to acknowledge the paternity of their children.

It is hard to raise money for religious programs. The government worries about church-state issues that the Supreme Court, without historical warrant, has imposed on it. And when the government does give money to churches, it often attaches to every federal dollar its full litany of rules, demands, and oversight requirements. Business firms do not ordinarily give money to churches at all. Many would rather spend it on associations that attack capitalism.

There are good preachers and bad preachers, church programs that work and ones that do not. We have no way of finding out which is which save by intense personal inquiry. What we need are privately funded groups that would evaluate the fiscal soundness and programmatic intensity of church efforts, distribute to firms and foundations lists of apparently worthwhile programs, and help raise money for ones that pass this initial screening. We need in each large city the religious equivalent of the United Fund, but one that, unlike the Fund, is focused chiefly on solving the problems of the underclass with church-related activities. Corporate funds would support the healing role of churches.

After the therapeutic state

The policies I have described cost money and have unknown effects. How can I encourage skeptics to spend more money on things about which we know so little?

In a rational world, we would take money from failed programs. Despite the absence of any evidence that federal spending helps schools, we spend over six billion federal dollars a year on schools. Federal job-training programs have, at best, modest effects; cut back on them. Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute estimates that in 1992 we spent $290 billion on persons with low incomes—$5,600 for every man, woman, and child in the lowest fifth of the nation's income ladder. Money exists, but this is a political world, and wasted money is rarely recaptured. But even if more money is required, recall the message of political scientist John DiIulio: If you find a man with a knife in his back, you don't make him better just by pulling the knife out. The American people have rejected the welfare state not because it costs too much

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but because it has not helped people.

Our goal is not to enlarge the welfare system but to change it. All about us lies the wreckage of the therapeutic state. It has created not self-respect but social dependency. When asked what the government should do to change family structure, Senator Moynihan answered this way: "If you expect a government program to change families, you know more about government than I do." Governments can transfer money; they cannot build character. Our best hope is to transfer the money to private agencies—churches and voluntary associations—that have shown in the past a capacity to change people.

The tougher question is what will work. Will anything I have suggested make a difference? I do not know. In my defense, I remind you that these policies are consistent with what every parent already knows and what social science belatedly recognizes. The human personality emerges early; if it is to be shaped, it must be shaped early. Investing in early childhood is the most important investment any society can make. We have known that for centuries, but only in modern times have we allowed many parents—and encouraged some by means of financial subsidies—to avoid making this investment.

No parent, whether father or mother, can "have it all." Choices must be made between family and work. The first must take priority over the second. This choice affects women more profoundly than men because women are closer to their children. The vast majority of all single-parent homes are female headed. This is not the result of a legal arrangement but of human choice. If we care about how children are raised in their early years, and if, as is now the case, how they are raised is left to overwhelmed women or institutional arrangements, the only way we can restore the balance is by committing money to the task of inducing actions that were once the product of spontaneous arrangements.

Religion has shaped life in every culture that has ever existed, and has done so more powerfully than the mass media or government programs. Throughout the Western world, political and intellectual elites have abandoned interest in, or acquired a deep hostility to, the force that has given meaning to Western life. To a degree, this was understandable. The

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Enlightenment, of which we all are part, was created by thinkers who wished to end religious warfare and sectarian authority. But we have done more than end religious warfare; we have tried hard to end religion itself, thereby subjecting much of mankind to a new form of warfare—the hopeless struggle of lonely souls against impulses they can neither understand nor control. This is a feature of almost all of the Western world, and it helps explain why crime rates and illegitimate births have been rising rapidly almost everywhere and not just here.

One by one

We live today with the advantages of three centuries of political and intellectual emancipation, but those advantages were purchased at a price. Most of us do not feel that price because we have transformed the teachings of the Enlightenment into personal wealth, political power, social advantage, or intellectual accomplishment. Those who have done so are part of one nation, proud of what freedom has allowed us to achieve. But there is a second nation, growing more rapidly than the first. It is the nation for which the price of freedom has been especially high. It is armed to the teeth, excited by drugs, preoccupied with "respect," and indifferent to the future. Its children crowd our schools and fill our streets, armed and dangerous.

Cultures grow up out of the countless small choices of millions of people. To restore a culture, we must do it retail, not wholesale. We are not fighting the Second World War, we are trying to retake a captured city where the struggle goes on person by person, block by block, building by building. That struggle may be lost. When a culture changes, policy can rarely change it back. But I am an optimist. America has been told it would be destroyed by slavery, alcohol, subversion, immigration, civil war, economic collapse, and atom bombs, and it has survived them all. Most people wish to be part of a family and one nation. If we wish to be one nation again, we must make the second one part of the first. We have tried almost everything to do this except the one thing that matters most—rebuilding the family. However difficult, it is what there is left to try.

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Body and soul: the musical miseducation of youth

MARTHA BAYLES

FOR my title, I borrow the name of a song written by Johnny Green and most famously recorded by Coleman Hawkins in 1939. That recording was a success on the charts, in dance halls, and on radio. It was also, in the view of most intellectuals, without lasting value. On the right, popular jazz was considered a violation of traditional musical standards committed for the basest of motives, profit, by members of two groups, blacks and Jews, who were socially if not racially inferior. On the left, such music was seen either as the shameless commercialization of a once-authentic folk music or, in the highbrow anti-Stalinist opinion of *Partisan Review*, as kitsch: cheap, disposable, and derivative of genuine art, which it threatened to cannibalize. Today, Hawkins's recording of "Body and Soul" is a classic. After being kept on jukeboxes for 20 years by the listening public,

This article is based on a lecture presented at the University of Chicago on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind.

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it is now studied and esteemed as both beautiful in its own right and a harbinger of the maturity of America's only original art form.

Yet "Body and Soul" emerged from a musical culture that is still, despite its dominance in the West (and by extension the world), prone to intellectual distortions. These distortions matter, not only because they have affected the cultural position of jazz but also because they have decisively shaped the musical culture of youth. My argument with Allan Bloom, which I once had the satisfaction of inflicting on him while sipping Scotch and (I regret to say) mooching his Marlboros, is that his critique of rock music rests more on these distortions than on solid ground. Like most arguments with Allan Bloom, this one was well worth having nine years ago, and would be still. I wish he were here to respond with the same playful grace.

Plato and the romanticists

According to Robert Asahina, Bloom's editor at Simon & Schuster (who takes pride in having placed the chapter on rock at the front of *The Closing of the American Mind*), it was that chapter that made the book a best-seller. Whether or not they understood the rest of what Bloom was saying, the thousands of people who read him on rock assumed that here at last was an in-depth treatment by a real-life philosopher.

Was that assumption correct? To some degree, yes. With his characteristic eloquence, Bloom elucidates the Socratic view of music, beginning with Plato's assertion that the pure elements of music—melody, harmony, and rhythm—cannot be trusted because they are the language of the barbarous or non-rational part of the soul. The more beautiful and compelling the music, the greater its capacity to stir the passions, which is why Plato placed music at the core of education. The virtues govern the passions, so the way to develop the virtues is to channel and refine the passions, a task that requires the aid of music because music resonates with the passions on the deepest level. But music is only an aid, and must be handled with care. Writes Bloom: "According to the Socratic formula, the lyrics—speech and, hence, reason—must determine the music—harmony and rhythm."

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Bloom also reminds us, by quoting *The Merchant of Venice* and other works of literature and philosophy far removed from Plato's time, that the Socratic formula has played a central role in Western musical thought. Reinforcing that role (though Bloom does not mention it) is the warning, passed down from the Hebrew prophets, that too much music will confuse the mind and distract from the Word of God. Thus the early Christians spurned the rich instrumental homophony of pagan music in favor of a spare vocal monophony. During the late Middle Ages, when vocal music had moved toward polyphony, the Church explicitly revived Plato's teaching that music with more than one melody was inimical to the exercise of reason. Distrust of polyphony reappeared in the late sixteenth century, when the Florentine Camerata banished both polyphony and complex melody in an attempt to revive what they imagined to be the musical practices of ancient Greece.

I say "imagined" because very little is known about the musical practices of ancient Greece. For one thing, Plato rarely wrote about music in isolation. For his contemporaries, music and poetry were one, a fusion of words and melody chanted or sung to instrumental accompaniment and often dance. *The Republic* offers great wisdom about the temptations and indulgences of what we would call literature. But about musical sound, its wisdom has worn less well.

What specific observations does Plato make about musical sound? The two most frequently cited are the Chaldean-Pythagorean teaching that the harmonic intervals of the Greek scale corresponded to the laws of the universe, and the view that Dorian melodies are nobler than Phrygian ones. What wisdom can we find in these? Our scales, not to mention our scientific laws, have changed quite a lot in the last 24 centuries.[1] And the difference between Dorian and Phrygian melo-

[1] It may of course be argued that the system of tonality that has ordered Western music since the Middle Ages is rooted in nature because the rudiments of harmony and the diatonic scale are discernible in the series of "overtones" that accompany any naturally (that is, non-electronically) produced musical tone. In the twentieth century, this argument gained special force as a counter to the radical rejection of tonality by post-Webern serialist composers and theoreticians. Today, most scholars acknowledge the stubborn persistence of Western tonality while also noting that it is but one of several different musical systems erected on the same natural foundation.

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dies is lost to us. Scholars speculate endlessly about the nature of ancient Greek music, but as the historian Donald Grout has remarked, "No field of musicology has produced a richer crop of disputation from a thinner soil of fact."

To be sure, that soil has also yielded a general truth, here summarized by Bloom:

> Civilization or, to say the same thing, education is the taming or domestication of the soul's raw passions—not suppressing or excising them, which would deprive the soul of its energy—but forming and informing them as art. A man whose noblest activities are accompanied by a music that expresses them while providing a pleasure extending from the lowest bodily to the highest spiritual, is whole, and there is no tension in him between the pleasant and the good.

The trouble is that no one, not even Bloom, can apply this abstraction to actual music without standing on shifting ground. Take Bloom's view of romanticism. He finds in Plato a cogent critique of both the Enlightenment philosophers and their romanticist successors. The mistake of the Enlightenment, says he, was rationalism, or an excessive attachment to reason that, among other things, led to a dismissal of the role of music in education. It was in response to this anti-musical rationalism that romanticism was born: "Only in those great critics of Enlightenment and rationalism, Rousseau and Nietzsche, does music return, and they were the most musical of philosophers." Yet Bloom also faults Rousseau, and especially Nietzsche, for going too far in the opposite direction and seeking "to cultivate the enthusiastic states of the soul and to re-experience the Corybantic possession deemed a pathology by Plato."

One would think, therefore, that Bloom would take a dim view of romanticist music. But he is oddly evasive on the subject. At one point, he remarks that romanticist music may be too "overrefined" for the modern—and American—temper. But he does not attempt to judge romanticist music by Plato's lights. Instead, he showers blessings on all "the old European music" and, while in the same mellow mood, all the old European philosophers as well. "To Plato and Nietzsche," he writes, "the history of music is a series of attempts to give form and beauty to the dark, chaotic, premonitory forces in the soul."

To some of Bloom's critics the spectacle of this archenemy

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of relativism blurring the difference between Plato and Nietzsche on music might be enough to discredit his whole argument. That is not my position. On the contrary, I agree with Bloom (and Plato and Nietzsche) that music should not be used to whip human beings into a mindless frenzy. I further agree that certain kinds of rock music are dedicated to that sole end. But I also think the Socratic formula should be applied to the music of the young more carefully than it is in *The Closing of the American Mind*.

About rock, Bloom relies (most unphilosophically, I fear) on three of the distortions mentioned above. The first distortion concerns commerce, the second rhythm, and the third the nature of popular music in the twentieth century. I will examine each of these in turn.

The capitalist taint

First, commerce. Elsewhere in his book, Bloom makes hamburger out of the Frankfurt School, that blend of Marx and Freud that he wittily dubs "two powerful systems served up in a single package." In his view, the Frankfurt School made Freud "the really meaty part of the concoction," because Freud provided "a solution to the problem of what men are going to do after the revolution." Of course, with Herbert Marcuse the question became what men (and women) are going to do before the revolution. As much as Bloom dislikes the Frankfurt School, he dislikes Marcuse more. Marcuse, he says, jettisoned the stern truths uncovered by Marx and Freud in favor of a pop-Nietzschean cult of erotic liberationism, which Bloom correctly identifies with the rock idols of the 1960s counterculture, notably Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones.

So far, so good. But whenever Bloom gets rock music into his sights, he undergoes a strange transformation and begins to sound like a Frankfurtian. "The rock business is perfect capitalism," he writes, comparing it with the narcotics trade. "The record-company executives, the new robber barons, who mine gold out of rock" are ruthlessly exploiting the natural eroticism of youth. This "enormous industry [that] cultivates the taste for the orgiastic state of feeling connected with sex" is, Bloom concludes, "big business, bigger than the movies, bigger than professional sports, bigger than television."

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Leaving aside the mundane question of how big these businesses actually are (rock being the smallest by far), I am struck by the sweeping, arbitrary nature of this pronouncement. It may be objected that the anti-commercial cast of Bloom's mind comes not from Marxism but from deep-seated philosophical doubts about the possibility of democratic—as opposed to aristocratic—art. He expresses this kind of doubt when he judges music video a medium with "room only for the intense, changing, crude and immediate, which Tocqueville warned would be the nature of democratic art."

There is, nonetheless, an abiding difference between the aristocratic and the Marxist views of art. In the former, the standard is aesthetic: Tocqueville worried about the vulgarity of democratic taste, but he did not rule out the possibility that genuine art might arise from humble sources. "In democracies," he wrote, "the springs of poetry are fine but few." In the Marxist view, the standard is ideological. If an object is tainted by association with the capitalist means of production, then, perforce, it cannot be art. It was in this spirit that Dwight MacDonald declared "Masscult ... bad in a new way; it doesn't even have the theoretical possibility of being good." Too often, Bloom's criticism assumes the same categorical rigidity. He says of music videos, "Nothing noble, sublime, profound, delicate, tasteful or even decent can find a place in such tableaux."

Why not? In the 20 years that recording companies have been making music videos, there have been a number of videos—a small number, to be sure—that have been if not noble, sublime or profound, at least delicate, tasteful, and decent. Two that come to mind are Paul Simon's "Boy in the Bubble" and Branford Marsalis's "Royal Garden Blues." The challenge of music video is that of combining visual images with music, a challenge that reaches well back into the Western tradition Bloom is so concerned to defend. Why not apply some of the well-earned insights of that tradition to the infant medium of music video? Bloom does not dream of doing such a thing, because on this subject he is the quintessential neoconservative, archly intolerant of any hint that popular culture might merit judgment by traditional standards. My neoconservative friends don't like to hear it, but the roots of this intolerance lie in

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Marxism.

The death of rhythm

The second distortion relied upon by Bloom is a blanket condemnation of rhythm. Of all the quotable sentences in *The Closing of the American Mind*, perhaps the most frequently quoted has been, "Young people know that rock has the beat of sexual intercourse." The public and the media seized upon this comment because they knew, without the aid of philosophy, that it aptly describes the repetitive and pounding beat of hard rock. Indeed, the hard rockers themselves know it. Steven Tyler of the band Aerosmith has boasted of his sound, "It's twos and fours, it's fucking."

Is this the last word on rhythm? Of course not. Hard rock grew out of the blues, most varieties of which have a strong backbeat. But, like all music in the Afro-American idiom, the blues sets off its basic structural beat, however strong or weak, with other rhythmic patterns that are in creative tension with the structural beat. It is within that tension that we find rhythmic counterpoint, or swing. Musically speaking, the worst thing about hard rock is its utter lack of swing. Rock lost its swing when it became the domain of the guitar hero: Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page in the 1960s, Ritchie Blackmore, Eddie Van Halen, and countless others today. These are talented musicians, many with classical training and a sophisticated grasp of harmony (not to mention state-of-the-art engineering skills). But they have chosen to waste their talents on a genre that abandons every musical value except speed and virtuosity. At best, hard rock is flashy and knife-edged; at worst, it is pyrotechnics supported by what the critic Dave Marsh calls a "dinosaur beat"—running the emotional gamut from A for Angst to B for Blitzkrieg

Such distinctions are lost on Bloom, whose sole pronouncement on rhythm is that it is "orgasmic." He should have left this particular prejudice in the dustbin of history where he found it. The rich, tireless, complicated rhythms of good Afro-American music are not reminiscent of sexual intercourse but of the bodily activities that have been accompanied by rhythm since time immemorial—notably work, dance, and worship. I find it passing strange that a student of Greek philosophy,

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with its emphasis on the link between the habits of practical activity and the virtues of intellect and character, should overlook these venerable applications of rhythm. In Africa, where our American rhythms originate, as well as in many other parts of the world (such as India and the British Isles), it has long been understood that the finer the rhythm, the better it will revive the weary and reconcile the discordant. Rhythm moves the body, yes. But this can be a civilizing as well as a barbarous thing.

Rhythm can be used barbarously, of course. From the perspective of the 1990s, Bloom's preoccupation with sex in rock looks downright quaint. Pounding (and, in my opinion, equally unswinging) rhythms meted out by computer now dominate what can only be called a musical culture of death. Marilyn Manson, the industrial rock group that claims Satanic inspiration for songs such as "Kiddie Grinder," sold a million copies of their album *Antichrist Superstar* last spring. *Life After Death*, the posthumous album from the gangsta rapper Notorious B.I.G., sold 685,000 copies the week after he was killed in a drive-by shooting—giving new meaning to the old Billboard phrase, "No. 1 with a bullet." Among white rockers, the theme is suicide; among black rappers, it is murder. Just a couple of years ago, this death-dealing was a pose. Today, it is touted in some quarters as a mark of true artistry.

How did we arrive at this sorry pass? With Bloom, I identify the late 1960s as the turning point. That was when the counterculture went sour, and rock-'n'-roll began to attract people who were less interested in music than in using the popular medium for culturally radical purposes. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that rock-'n'-roll as it existed prior to the late 1960s was not a musical and cultural revolution. On the contrary, there were many significant continuities between it and the musical culture that produced the likes of Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, and Frank Sinatra. These continuities were both musical (the ability to swing) and extra-musical (old-fashioned courtesy toward the audience). And they persisted into the mid 1960s in soul music, Motown, and the early Beatles.

Then came the change. About Mick Jagger, Bloom's instincts are right on target; Jagger's stage persona is indeed consonant with pop-Nietzschean erotic liberationism. The Roll-

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ing Stones relished the blues. But as products of the hothouse atmosphere of the British art colleges (they were all, except Jagger, art students), the Stones did not hesitate to turn their imitation Chicago blues into a vehicle for shocking the bourgeoisie. Among other things, it was an effective marketing ploy to make themselves the "bad boy" group, in contrast to the "good boy" Beatles. Similar, but more drastic, was the transformation wrought by Frank Zappa, Iggy Pop, the New York Dolls, and the Velvet Underground—fellow travelers of the 1960s avant-garde whose stage shows resembled "happenings" more than they did concerts. The fatal step, though, was punk, the 1970s phenomenon that was, and is, a form of performance art, not music. Punk's ethos of deliberate ugliness required it to attack music along with everything else. And its influence lingers in every mainstream style, such as grunge rock and gangsta rap, where the fires of adolescent lust, aggression, and despair are most irresponsibly stoked.

The Afro-American epoch

American popular music was not always like this. But you can't prove that by Bloom. The third and most glaring distortion he relies upon can be found in his assertion that "rock music has risen to its current heights in the education of the young on the ashes of classical music." The best way to refute this assertion is to poke around in those same ashes.

The broader Western musical culture of the twentieth century includes a huge body of art music preserved in repertory performance and recording. But how much genuine art music has it created? The question is posed forcefully by Henry Pleasants, for 35 years the classical music critic for the *International Herald Tribune*. After years of reviewing performances and recordings of atonal, serialist, and aleatory compositions, Pleasants wrote: "It was during the postwar period that I began to have misgivings about the validity of the new music, and of the new serial music particularly. It gave me no pleasure, no sense of any salutary esthetic reward. Nor did it seem to give pleasure to anyone else." Of course, pleasure is not always the point. The art music of the twentieth century has been admired for its intellectual rigor, the quality that places it in the camp of high modernism. But even within that

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camp, this body of work has suffered a brain drain. Many critics otherwise committed to high modernism—the late Samuel Lipman comes to mind—have expressed doubts about atonal, serialist, and aleatory music. In a nutshell, there seems to be a growing critical consensus that intellectual rigor is no excuse for musical rigor mortis.

I single out Pleasants because he is one of the few critics to have taken the next step, which is to suggest that the gap left by art music has been filled, more than adequately, by the body of music created, and historically dominated, by black Americans. For Pleasants, the "serious" versus "popular" division in music is not one of quality (there is good and bad to be found in both) but of *idiom*. He reminds us that Western music has undergone an idiomatic shift every time its creative center has shifted geographically. During the Renaissance, the center was the Netherlands. During the Baroque era, Italy. The center of the classical period was Austria-Bohemia, and of the romantic, Germany. Future historians, Pleasants predicts, will describe the first half of the twentieth century as "the Afro-American epoch."

Whether or not we agree with this proposition, it has the effect of clearing the air. If music is the queen of the arts, then perhaps one cause of the "culture wars" is an abiding intellectual misunderstanding of the position of music in twentieth-century culture. On this subject, even the most educated people tend to muddle along, respecting music they do not love, loving music they do not respect, and arguing bitterly in language fraught with myths and shibboleths. The problem is, they don't ask the right questions. Bloom, for example, doesn't ask whether Afro-American music as a whole is civilized or barbarous. He finds rock barbarous, but does that apply to the rest of the idiom? If not, where does he draw the line? I pose these questions not to dispute Bloom's musical judgments but to point out that, except in the most obvious apples-and-oranges way, he doesn't make any.

Nietzsche vs. Armstrong

Bloom's chapter on music contains only one reference to jazz, a comment about the musical tastes of college students 50 years ago. In addition to enjoying a smattering of Euro-

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pean composers, "many, even most, of that generation also swung with Benny Goodman, but with an element of self-consciousness—to be hip, to prove they weren't snobs, to show solidarity with the democratic ideal of a pop culture out of which would grow a high culture." This comment certainly captures some of the ideological justifications given by the Old Left in the 1930s for its begrudging approval of commercialized swing music. But it fails to explain Benny Goodman's appeal to millions of non-ideological listeners, including a great many college students.

There is only one other reference to jazz in Bloom's book. In a chapter deploring the superficiality of American pop-Nietzscheanism, Bloom offers this example:

> The image of the astonishing Americanization of the German pathos can be seen in the smiling face of Louis Armstrong as he belts out the words of his great hit "Mack the Knife." As most American intellectuals know, it is a translation of the song "Mackie Messer" from *The Threepenny Opera*, a monument of Weimar Republic popular culture, written by two heroes of the artistic Left, Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill.... Less known to our intelligentsia is an aphorism in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a book well known to Brecht, entitled "On the Pale Criminal," which tells the story of a neurotic murderer [who] ... lusted after "the joy of the knife." This scenario for "Mack the Knife" is the beginning of the supra-moral expectancy, waiting to see what the volcano of the id will spew forth, which appealed to Weimar and its American admirers.

For all its lively play of references (I have omitted Bloom's mentions of Hitler, Lotte Lenya, Marlene Dietrich, and Dostoevsky), this passage says precious little about the man who actually "belted out" the song. Never mind that Louis Armstrong rarely belted out songs, and certainly did not belt out "Mack the Knife." More important, Bloom takes a cultural fact—the popularity of "Mack the Knife" in postwar America—and assigns all possible weight to its German philosophical and literary antecedents and none whatsoever to its American musical patrimony. It is true that Weill wrote "Mack the Knife" in Berlin during the 1920s. But it is also true that Weill was by then well-versed in the jazz idiom. His best songs are solidly in the tradition of W. C. Handy, Irving Berlin, Fats Waller, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, and Cole Porter—so

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it's hardly surprising that Armstrong recorded one. From a jazz standpoint, "Mack the Knife" was just another "standard." As for the lyrics, which probably struck most Americans as being about Chicago gangsters (that is how they struck me, at a tender and non-intellectual age), they mattered less than the song's melodic and rhythmic possibilities. Bloom might have been interested to know that in 1956, when another recording of "Mack the Knife" (Bobby Darin's) became number one, there were seven hit versions of the song, six of them instrumentals.

In the same chapter, Bloom waxes indignant at the German condescension that views America as "a nonculture, a collection of castoffs from real cultures." Such indignation is ironic coming from someone who has just reduced Louis Armstrong to a hollow conduit through which the elixir of German philosophy flowed into an empty American vessel. During the period Bloom is writing about, the 1940s and 1950s, there was a tremendous surge of European interest in American culture, especially jazz. During World War II, the better jazz reached Europe via radio broadcasts aimed at American servicemen. In the 1950s, the U.S. government saw the logic of the situation and began to send Armstrong and other jazz elders overseas as "ambassadors of goodwill." And in the Eastern bloc, jazz became quite literally the Voice of America. Yet Bloom ignores this history, writing that, "after the war, while America was sending out its blue jeans to unite the young of all nations, ... it was importing a clothing of German fabrication for its souls." The message is clear: American souls have no furnishings of their own, and nothing to offer the rest of the world, except blue jeans. Here Bloom seems as convinced as any German that America is a "nonculture."

Jazz as classicism

Taken as a whole, Afro-American music has not produced many expositors or theoreticians. Most of its practitioners think musically, not verbally, about what they are doing. But, as Bloom of all people should know, the idea that musicians must also be theoreticians is the exceptional fruit of German philosophy, not the rule of Western civilization. What the Socratic formula requires of intellect is that it play its proper

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role in music: shaping the impulses of the imagination, sustaining the tradition, justifying new methods. The intellect should not presume to reinvent music from scratch. As the high modernist music of this century (and the forms of jazz that have recapitulated its experiments) reveals, intellectual presumption yields mainly desiccated results.

If pressed, Bloom would probably say that the achievements of Afro-American music are modest in stature, compared with the beloved repertory of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European music. He would probably echo Aaron Copland's 1930 complaint that jazz expresses only a narrow range of emotion, from "the blues" to "the snappy number." He would have a point: Most jazz, including the highly developed strains that appeared after 1930, is less emotional than the beloved repertory. Romantic music is deeply passionate, and late-romantic music is even more so—to a fault, some would say. Indeed, the early modernist composers (including Copland) believed that, after Wagner, the only hope for music was to rescue it from excessive emotion. So they deliberately drew back from the peaks and abysses found in romanticism.

Jazz does the same thing, albeit for different reasons. Elsewhere I have written about the stoicism of the blues, a theme I take largely from Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray. Afro-American music was created by a group of people who could ill afford to cultivate extreme emotion, especially negative emotion. The passionate intensity achieved in blues and gospel is ritual in nature, achieved not as an end in itself but to help the listener get a grip, get over, get through another day. This stoic quality is not lost on the true admirers of Afro-American music. And neither are its related virtues, all of them classicist: wit, elegance, playfulness, lucidity, detachment.

These virtues survive in popular music, despite the wreckage of the past 30 years. On the higher levels, jazz is becoming part of the beloved repertory. On the lower, the worst material retains its following and its defenders on the journalistic and academic left (not to mention the libertarian right). Yet there is also much ferment, as high technology brings all kinds of music to all kinds of people. This novel situation, having everything at our fingertips, is part of what is meant by postmodernism. According to the experts, postmodernism

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puts everything on the same debased level. But if that were true, then human nature would be mutating into some new, anti-musical form, and it is not. Human beings seek the things *they have always sought in music: not the formal complexity* of high modernism, necessarily, but not ugliness, either. They seek the elemental, the primal things: the motive power of rhythm and the emotional power of melody and harmony.

This includes college students. At bottom, my gripe with Bloom is that he pays no real attention to the musical battles being fought in the souls of youth. He finds his students lacking in "strong prejudices" against which to test serious learning. Yet he dismisses their passion for music as a moral and cultural dead end. After effectively denouncing all popular music—the refined and the crude, the benign and the malignant, the classic and the ephemeral—as "a nonstop, commercially prepackaged masturbational fantasy," he writes, "One need only ask first-year university students what music they listen to, how much of it and what it means to them, in order to discover that the phenomenon is universal." Bloom was a gifted teacher, so I believe he asked his students that question. But perhaps, like Socrates, he should have engaged their answers.

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Killing off the dying?

ADAM WOLFSON

AMERICANS seem ready to embrace something extraordinary: a practice called assisted death whereby a physician helps an ailing patient kill himself. "Kill" is a harsh word, and advocates understandably use it rarely. They prefer "death control," or "death with dignity," or "self-deliverance," or, more pleasant still, "spiritual birthing" and "midwifing through the dying process." However, as legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin notes in his book *Life's Dominion*, "legally sanctioned killing" is in some instances what's under consideration. Another prominent advocate of the practice, Timothy E. Quill, agrees: "Doctors 'killing' patients is technically correct." He should know. He's done it. In a widely discussed 1991 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the professor of medicine and psychiatry revealed that he had prescribed a lethal dose of barbiturates to his patient Diane who had been diagnosed with leukemia. "I made sure that she knew how to use the barbiturates for sleep, and also that she knew the amount needed to commit suicide," he

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wrote.

Dworkin and Quill are among the most influential and thoughtful of the supporters of assisted death—they represent the movement's high brow. The constitutional case for physician-assisted suicide is made by Dworkin: Because the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment protects a person's right to make intimate and personal choices, the state oversteps its bounds when it prohibits doctors from assisting in the deaths of patients who want such aid. Quill, who has worked extensively with dying patients, provides the medical rationale: Because even the best palliative care cannot control some patients' suffering, doctors should be allowed to provide assistance in dying as a humane alternative.

The two men recently teamed up to argue in favor of physician-assisted suicide before the Supreme Court. Quill wanted New York's ban on physician-assisted suicide overturned. When the case, *Vacco v. Quill*, made it to the Supreme Court, Dworkin filed one of the key briefs in support of the practice. The Court decided to remain neutral, however. Chief Justice Rehnquist observed in a companion case that "Americans are engaged in an earnest and profound debate about the morality, legality, and practicality of physician assisted suicide," a debate he thought should not be cut short by the Court but should "continue." At least for a time, it is for the American people to decide whether physicians are granted the power to kill. Thus it is especially important to understand the state of the assisted-death movement in America and the argument made on its behalf.

What the Constitution says about the extent of our liberty and what palliative care can accomplish are two aspects of that argument. But since there are no shortage of legal and medical experts (of which I am neither) to debate these matters, I will explore some more general issues, ones that have gone largely unnoticed. I have in mind the cultural and political aspects of doctor-assisted death—the phenomenon of assisted death as it manifests itself in our common life. For example: Is a narrow elite pushing the issue or is the public in general concerned about the state of medical care at the end of life? Why has doctor-assisted killing become a cause, and what political arguments are made in its favor? Finally,

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what sort of America would we be if doctors gained a license to kill? To answer such questions I have gone to those who advocate assisted death, whether on the Internet, or in popular books, newspapers, and journals.

Doctor death

It would be a mistake to suppose that the demand for assisted death is the preoccupation of a "New Class" or liberal elite out of touch with the majority of Americans. Twenty-five years ago such an elite secured a national right to abortion by making an end run around state legislatures that were struggling with the issue. An appeal was made to the Supreme Court, which declared abortion a fundamental right protected by the Constitution. In the case of doctor-assisted death, it is the American people who are out in front of the Court.

This past November, residents of Oregon voted in favor of legalizing physician-assisted suicide. They had done the same in 1994 by a narrow margin, 51 percent to 49 percent. However, a Federal judge had prevented the original measure from being put into effect, and in the meantime, the state legislature, dominated by Republicans, had sent the measure back to the voters for a second look. The hope had been that opponents of assisted suicide would prevail, but that did not happen. Though opponents outspent advocates by $2.5 million to $600,000, Oregon residents voted for the second time in three years to legalize assisted suicide, this time by an overwhelming margin—60 percent to 40 percent.

Oregon is the first state officially to recognize a legal right to physician-assisted suicide. It is too early to say how it will be exercised in practice. But Michigan has unofficially recognized such a right since 1990, the year Jack Kevorkian began his killing spree in Michigan, and there the record of the right's use is extensive.

Hollywood could not have created a more ghoulish character than Kevorkian. Early in his medical career, he got the nickname "Dr. Death" for the hospital rounds he would make decked out in a black arm band, on the lookout for dying patients whose eyes he would peer into to determine the exact time of death. Much later in his career, he became an artist,

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recently displaying, the *New York Times* reported, "a collection of 13 oil paintings depicting severed heads, moldering skulls and rotting corpses." But Kevorkian has always had a much larger goal. In his autobiography, *Prescription: Medicide*, he recounts how as a young medical resident in the late 1950s he "became convinced" that he had "the responsibility to promulgate a profound idea." That idea was to conduct medical experiments on death-row prison inmates before they were executed. The experiments were to be performed only on anesthetized inmates who had previously consented and only for certain ends, the good of humanity and basic research, or so he claimed. (Needless to say, no such experiments ever took place.)

Today, Kevorkian is of course known as the foremost advocate and practitioner of physician-assisted suicide. But in his view the practice of assisted death is a distraction—"merely the first step, an early distasteful professional obligation," he writes. He calls physician-assisted suicide "medicide," a specialty to be practiced by medical technicians at designated "suicide centers." His "ultimate aim," his lodestar, is the creation of a new specialty and a new institution—he calls it "obitiatry"—to which assisted suicide is but a means. "Obitiatry" is, he explains, the "unfettered experimentation on human death" in pursuit of useful knowledge as well as knowledge into what death itself is. But to fulfill this preternatural aim Kevorkian needs dying patients. The medical experiments that he wanted done on death-row prison inmates would now be conducted on those who opt for physician-assisted suicide, with their consent he adds.

Kevorkian took his "first step" in the direction of "obitiatry" on June 4, 1990, the day he dispatched Janet Adkins, a 54-year-old woman who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease the year before. She was in many ways typical of the victims that would follow: female, not terminally ill, and killed not long after her first meeting with Kevorkian. It was her husband Ron who contacted Kevorkian to employ his services, and some evidence indicates that Janet was not competent to consent to her "suicide." Here's how Kevorkian describes her request for assisted suicide in his autobiography:

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> My two sisters, Margo and Flora, and I met with Ron, Janet, and Janet's close friend Carroll Rehmke in their motel room on Saturday afternoon, 2 June 1990. After getting acquainted through a few minutes of conversation, the purpose of the trip was thoroughly discussed. I had already prepared authorization forms signifying Janet's intent, determination, and freedom of choice, which she readily agreed to sign. Here again, while she was resolute in her decision, and absolutely mentally competent, her impaired memory was apparent when she needed her husband's assistance in forming the cursive letter 'A.' She could print the letter but not write it, and the consent forms required that her signature be written. So her husband showed her on another piece of paper how to form the cursive 'A,' and Janet complied.

A videotape of Kevorkian's June 2 meeting with Janet Adkins also suggests that she did not willingly choose assisted suicide, or at the very least that she was quite confused and ill at the time. A transcript of the videotape is recorded in Michael Betzold's book, *Appointment with Doctor Death*:

> Kevorkian then asks Janet Adkins:
>
> "Janet, are you aware of your decision and the implications of your decision?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "What does it mean?"
>
> "That I can get out with dignity." She pauses. "Maybe." She giggles.
>
> "What are you asking for? Can you put it in plain words?"
>
> "I don't know."
>
> "Just—what is it you want? What is it you want?"
>
> "I would like to ... "
>
> "Put it in simple English."
>
> She wipes an eye with a finger.
>
> "Self-delivered and ... "
>
> "No, simpler, simpler than that."
>
> "I don't know." She looks confused and turns to her husband.
>
> "Can you help me?"

Few of his other assisted suicides, many of them described in *The Suicide Machine*, published by the Detroit Free Press staff, were any less morally ambiguous than the first. On February 15, 1993, Kevorkian killed emphysema-sufferer Hugh Gale—victim number 13—by placing a plastic mask over his nose and mouth and poisoning him with carbon monoxide.

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Found in Kevorkian's garbage was a typed description of Gale's death, signed by Kevorkian, which indicated that twice during the procedure Gale had demanded, "Take it off!" Kevorkian killed Rebecca Badger—victim number 33—on July 9, 1996 by lethal injection. She had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis; however, no sign of the disease was found upon autopsy. Lisa Lansing—victim number 46—was also killed by a Kevorkian lethal injection, on February 2, 1997. According to her doctors in New Jersey, she suffered from no identifiable disease.

What the public thinks

I have spent some time describing the man and his vision not because I expect to expose his activities to an unknowing public and thereby to put a stop to him. It's too late for that: Kevorkian has addressed the National Press Club; he has appeared on the cover of *Time*; he has been a guest on several popular television shows, including NBC's "Dateline" and "60 Minutes"; he has written a remarkably candid autobiography. It's safe to say that most Americans have heard of Kevorkian and know what he does for a living, even if they don't know of his larger ambitions. My intention is more modest: It is simply to place the reaction of the residents of Michigan to Kevorkian in context. How did they, along with their elected officials and the legal community, respond to a man who kills with abandon? Who kills with as much political intent as the Unabomber or Timothy J. McVeigh? Who kills to further his agenda of human experimentation?

Here's the response in brief: In December of 1990, Kevorkian was charged with murdering Janet Adkins, but a local judge dismissed the charges. A few years later, Kevorkian was again charged with murder and again a judge dismissed the charges, praising Kevorkian for bringing "to the world's attention the need to give this topic paramount concern." In December 1992, Governor John Engler signed a bill that temporarily banned assisted suicide in the state, and, in December 1994, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled against a right to assisted suicide—but Kevorkian went on killing nonetheless. On three separate occasions, Kevorkian was tried for murder before a jury, and each time acquitted—in the second

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trial when the not-guilty verdict was read by the jury foreman (a United Methodist clergyman!), spectators in the courtroom applauded. Richard Thompson, the Republican prosecutor who doggedly pursued Kevorkian, was defeated in his bid for re-election in 1996, in no small part as thanks for his efforts to jail Kevorkian. Though the U.S. Supreme Court that same year upheld a judge's injunction prohibiting Kevorkian from assisting in any additional suicides, the newly elected prosecutor announced that he would not try to enforce the ban.

And why would he? A *New England Journal of Medicine* poll taken in 1994, when Kevorkian was just warming up, indicated that 66 percent of Michigan residents and 56 percent of its doctors favored the legalization of physician-assisted suicide. According to a 1997 survey—many Kevorkian-assisted deaths later—68 percent of men and 59 percent of women polled in Michigan favored "the idea of allowing phyician-assisted suicide for people who are physically suffering, or terminally ill, but mentally competent to request help in dying." As Peter Jennings on ABC's "WorldNews Tonight" observed this past fall, the political debate over Kevorkian is "a thing of the past." Obviously, Kevorkian is not the representative of some elitist campaign; if anything, Dr. Death is a folk-hero. "He has a warm, zany sense of humor," wrote one author in her comprehensive book on death in America. The man who would experiment on live patients before he puts them away, and who has reportedly already killed 70 to 100 people, is to the residents of Michigan just a doctor doing his job, it would seem.

The acceptance of what was once the gruesomely unacceptable in Michigan (and Oregon) is no fluke of local politics. That much is clear. Rather than anomalies these states are trendsetters. According to the *Washington Post*, 20 other states are currently considering right-to-die measures, and Michigan has already begun a petition drive to put a measure similar to Oregon's on the ballot. A recent Harris poll reported that 68 percent of Americans believe that terminally ill patients should be allowed to receive lethal doses of medication from their physician. Web sites promoting assisted death are many, and there are numerous right-to-die organizations throughout America, including Americans for Death with Dignity, Death

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With Dignity Education Center, Choice in Dying, Compassion in Dying, Euthanasia Research and Guidance Organization (ERGO!), and so forth and so on. The most famous of these groups is the Hemlock Society, which has some 75 chapters and 72,000 dues paying members in the United States. Its founder and director until recently, Derek Humphry, wrote the 1991 best seller *Final Exit*, which sold half a million copies and spent 18 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list. It is perhaps the most widely read of the self-help books on assisted death, a burgeoning genre. Humphry describes in easy-to-follow lessons how to kill oneself, for example, "with barbiturate drugs ... plus a plastic bag to be quick and absolutely sure." "My personal choice," noted Humphry parenthetically.

The technology trap

The American people seem ready, if given the opportunity, to put in place some form of assisted death, as they have done *de jure* in Oregon and *de facto* in Michigan. The question is why? Conservatives frequently point to the abortion precedent. Once the American people became inured to over one million abortions per year, it was only a matter of time before they backed other forms of medical killing, creating what has become known as a "Culture of Death." The argument is not without merit: Liberals themselves frequently claim that the abortion right provides legal precedent for a right to physician-assisted suicide. However, there are more persuasive explanations for the popularity of assisted death, ones that have little to do with the politics of abortion.

In particular, the advance of medical science, which has made the dying process longer and, in certain respects, more agonizing than it was previously, has heightened interest in assisted death. Less than one hundred years ago, the leading causes of death were influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and gastritis, and the average life expectancy was in the mid forties. Most people died in their homes surrounded by family. What Montaigne had to say about aging and dying in the sixteenth century was still true in 1900: "What an idle fancy it is to expect to die of a decay of powers brought on by ex-

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treme old age, and to set ourselves this term for our duration, since that is the rarest of all deaths and the least customary!"

What was an "idle fancy" in Montaigne's day, and even as late as 1900, has become the rule in our own. The founders of the modern scientific endeavor hoped in their conquest of nature to stamp out disease and to prolong life. Descartes, for one, thought that with the proper cultivation of "the science of Medicine," "we could free ourselves from an infinity of maladies of body as well as of mind, and perhaps also even from the debility of age." Medical science did succeed in the first of these tasks, the conquest of disease, perhaps all too well. Today, most Americans live well into their seventies, many into their eighties and nineties. But modern medicine has been less successful in its second self-appointed task, freeing the human race of the debility of old age. The most common causes of death today are heart disease and cancer, deaths more fearsome than flu or pneumonia, and many Americans suffer from such degenerative diseases as Alzheimer's, strokes, and senility. Moreover, most Americans die not in the home as they once did but in arid hospitals surrounded by technicians and connected to machines. We find ourselves in a quandary of our own making—we live longer, more healthy lives, but awaiting us is a departure possibly more dreadful than before.

Jonathan Swift, I would note, would not have been surprised by our predicament. He had held that the hopes of the founders of modern science were "unreasonable," that they had presented the human race with a false choice. What was supposed by them was

> a perpetuity of youth, health, and vigour, which no man could be so foolish to hope, however extravagant he may be in his wishes. That the question therefore was not whether a man would choose to be always in the prime of youth, attended with prosperity and health, but how he would pass a perpetual life under all the usual disadvantages which old age brings along with it.

The benefits of modern medicine are great, of course. We live to see our children marry and start families; many of us live to see our grandchildren do so. The "usual disadvantages" of old age have been much alleviated: Artificial joints enable us to play tennis with the young, and, when disease strikes, pain

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medications unknown to previous generations make life bearable and death easier, in some instances. Yet for those Americans who die slow, painful deaths, Swift's objections to the modern scientific project might seem prescient. There are things worse than death, as he warned. Dying seems to be one of them.

The advance of medical science and technology, however, does not by itself explain the rising popularity of doctor-assisted death. For it is none too clear that the latter frees us from medical technology at the end of life. As Leon Kass has argued, the option of physician-assisted death represents "technicism's ultimate triumph." To be killed at the hands of a technically trained euthanasia specialist who administers a deadly dose of barbiturates manufactured and tested by a giant industrial pharmaceutical company is not to escape medical technology but to be ensnared by it, unto death.

If the goal is, as it should be, to demedicalize death, a more obvious solution is at hand, one that has nothing to do with doctors killing patients. Let the patient die: get him out of the hospital; discontinue unwanted, intrusive medical treatments; administer pain care only, and do so generously, even if it means, as it sometimes does in a small number of cases, that the patient might die from the pain treatment itself (this is known as "double effect"). These are, in my opinion, morally desirable responses to technology's encroachment upon the end of life. They are also most likely constitutional. In *Cruzan v. Missouri*, the Supreme Court sensibly implied that a patient has a right to determine the course of his medical treatment, possibly including the removal of respirators, feeding tubes, and the like. Many religious authorities, including the Catholic Church, have given their imprimatur to such an approach.

Tragically, however, doctors all too frequently refuse patients such an out, possibly fearful of legal repercussions or simply unsure of what their professional responsibilities require of them. Studies have shown that patients who prepare "living wills," "advance directives," and "do-not-resuscitate orders" receive the same treatment as patients who do not take such precautions. They are just as likely to find themselves on

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the other end of a respirator. Worse yet, many conservative activists equate, falsely I believe, the removal of all but the most heroic medical treatment with the active killing of a patient. Many liberal activists also simplify, insisting for example that death by "double effect," where the doctor intends to relieve pain but not to cause death, is no different from cases in which a doctor intends the death of the patient. The result: The public is not offered a middle way between the extremes of doctor-assisted death and life unnaturally prolonged, bullied and beaten, by unwanted medical technology at the end of life.

"Compassion in dying"

It would be convenient if physician-assisted death were simply a response to a life-preserving technology gone too far. One could then point out that assisted death exacerbates the problem and be done with it. But the issue's prominence has as much to do, if not more, with political ideology as technology. Though proponents of assisted death mention the rise of medical technology as something they are attempting to respond to, that is rarely their primary emphasis. As Kass has pointed out, two appeals are made, one is to the *compassion* of the caregiver; the second is to the *dignity* of the patient.[1] Neither is necessarily entwined with the problem of technology. In the first instance, killing is justified on the ground that life warped with pain and anguish should be compassionately ended, much like the ailing family dog is put out of its misery by the neighborhood veterinarian. In the second instance, killing is justified on the ground that a patient has requested it, and that the dignity of a human being lies in his making the most important decisions of his life (and death) for himself. Both appeals have excellent liberal pedigrees but taken to extreme lead to illiberal results.

How the virtue of compassion could become an excuse for physician-directed killing has a long, complicated history, one that I can hardly do justice to. Clifford Orwin has argued that

[1] This is as good a place as any to acknowledge my debt to Kass's work on the subject of physician-assisted death. See Kass, "Neither for Love nor Money: Why Doctors Must Not Kill," *The Public Interest*, Number 94, Winter 1989.

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certain modern thinkers, Rousseau the most important of them, elevated compassion to prominence, even as a replacement for the traditional theological virtue of Christian charity.[2] The advantages of the former were thought to be many. Whereas charity is other-worldly and concerned with man's eternal soul, compassion is this-worldly and concerned with his physical estate; whereas charity is of God, compassion is of man and based on a primordial need, felt by all, for relief from suffering. We see someone suffer and, realizing that it could be us, feel compassion for him. We feel his pain, as it is said, because we instinctively sense that it could be our own pain; and sensing that it could be our own, we want to end it as soon as possible. In extremity, compassion could lead us to minister to those who suffer by doing away with them, as it sometimes does in fact.

This is the reason—the evocative power of compassion—that advocates of physician-assisted suicide emphasize it above all else, purposely avoiding formal arguments. Timothy Quill, who has done so much to advance the cause of assisted death, advises policy makers, *"Don't argue over positions"* (italics in original). Instead, tell stories "of the unrelieved suffering of dying patients." For with the acknowledgment of such suffering "comes the possibility of a change in public policy and legal restrictions." In other words, the American public is to be persuaded to accept assisted death not by arguments about right and wrong. "Our obligation in medicine is to understand and explore, not to judge or impose," admonishes Quill. They are to be led to it via an unthinking compassion for those who suffer.

The books that "argue" for physician-assisted suicide consist mainly of harrowing accounts of human misery that even the best palliative care cannot treat. In the pages of such books, for example, Lonny Shavelson's *A Chosen Death*, as well as many others, one meets patients with full blown AIDS, patients with severe forms of dementia, patients with physical disabilities that defy imagination, patients with aggressive cancers that eat them alive. In his book *A Midwife Through the*

[2] Orwin has written extensively on compassion, including Orwin, "Moist Eyes—from Rousseau to Clinton," *The Public Interest*, Number 128, Summer 1997.

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Dying Process: Stories of Healing and Hard Choices at the End of Life, Quill tells the story of Cynthia, a thirty-seven-year-old graduate-school student diagnosed with gastric cancer:

> Each hour she had to choose between enduring severe pain and allowing her consciousness to be clouded. When she was alert she had relentless dry heaves, retching, and hiccoughs. In addition, the smell from her now gaping abdominal wound could not be ignored and was humiliating to Cynthia.... Life as she was now forced to live it had no quality.

In Cynthia and others like her, we are encouraged to see ourselves, and to wonder whether killing is not the most compassionate solution.

So highly valued is compassion to advocates of assisted suicide that it becomes the defining element in assigning praise and blame, innocence and guilt. It is both a motive to extreme action—the taking of a life—and a rationale for absolution. In Quill's view: "When the assistant is motivated by compassion for an incurably ill patient who clearly and repeatedly requests help, the act can be ethical and moral"; but if an assistant under identical conditions is motivated by some other passion "then the act of assistance becomes immoral, unethical." Quill argues further that not to provide the means of release from such suffering—not to kill the sufferer—can often seem "cruel" to family members. It is not happenstance that the assisted-suicide cases recently taken up by the U.S. Supreme Court were brought by an organization named "Compassion in Dying."

A euthanasia case that recently made its way through the Canadian court system is illustrative of the practice of an ethics of pure compassion. Robert Latimer was tried for the murder of his 12-year-old daughter Tracy who suffered from cerebral palsy. The father admitted that he had killed his daughter, and he did not claim that Tracy had asked to be killed. He wanted simply to end her pain and suffering. He felt compassion for his daughter. So he placed her in the cab of his truck and left the engine running until she died of carbon-monoxide poisoning. Canadian public opinion was generally supportive of Robert Latimer, and the judge in the case

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gave him but a one year sentence on the grounds that Latimer "was motivated solely by his love and compassion for Tracy and the need, at least in his mind—that she should not suffer any more pain."

Tracy's fate reminded me of a Flannery O'Connor essay about a young girl named Mary Ann who like Tracy suffered from a terrible disease and also died at the age of twelve. Mary Ann's affliction was cancer. "She had been born with a tumor on the side of her face," which was, O'Connor wrote, "plainly grotesque." About Mary Ann's physical suffering, O'Connor said little, though one can be reasonably sure that by today's standards of palliative care (she died in 1960), it was severe. Yet Mary Ann was not shown compassion by poison gas as was Tracy. She lived out her brief span in the care of the Sister Superior of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Free Cancer Home in Atlanta.

Tracy's world was about as far as one can get from Mary Ann's. Christian charity had been silenced by an ethics of total compassion in her case. O'Connor would have labeled it rule by "tenderness," and she knew down which dark roads it leads:

> If other ages felt less, they saw more, even though they saw with the blind, prophetical, unsentimental eye of acceptance, which is to say, of faith. In the absence of this faith now, we govern by tenderness. It is a tenderness which, long since cut off from the person of Christ, is wrapped in theory. When tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness, its logical outcome is terror. It ends in forced-labor camps and in the fumes of the gas chamber.

"Death with dignity"

The present push to legalize physician-directed killing is based primarily upon an appeal to tenderness or compassion. The political implications of giving doctors this lethal power are generally slighted, lost in debates over constitutional interpretation and the effectiveness of palliative care. But, as O'Connor knew, a pure ethics of compassion has had political consequences in our own century, of the most calamitous sort. Obviously we need not worry about gas chambers here, but there are other dreary possibilities; some of them are already

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in view.

It is, strangely enough, the principle of dignity that could provide a bridge from our natural fellow feelings of compassion for those who suffer to a politics that ceases to care for those who suffer. The word dignity itself is on the lips of every supporter of physician-assisted suicide, second only to compassion. In the popular defenses of the practice, as well as in the legal arguments of the courts, it is invoked like a talisman. One of Quill's books is titled *Death and Dignity*; Oregon named its assisted-suicide measure, "Death With Dignity Act"; the word comes up over a dozen times in Judge Stephen Reinhardt's Ninth Circuit ruling in favor of assisted suicide; it graces the names of many a pro-euthanasia organization.

But what does it mean to "die with dignity"? and why does that mean dying with the assistance of a physician? On the face of it, dying at the hands of another, by lethal injection no less, would hardly seem dignified in the dictionary sense of the word—noble, honorable, excellent. In truth, the sick and dying possess a dignity that transcends the doctor and his technique.

To die with dignity means something else to its promoters. Here's how Dworkin defines "dignity": "The most important feature of that culture [Western political culture] is a belief in individual human dignity: that people have the moral right—and the moral responsibility—to confront the most fundamental questions about the meaning and value of their own lives for themselves, answering to their own consciences and convictions." The Supreme Court in its *Casey* decision, defending the right to abortion, also equated dignity with autonomy. Thus, at least in its present meaning, to believe in human dignity is to believe that humans have a right to make choices for themselves, whether that choice is for assisted suicide or abortion or whatever. To be for dignity is, as a popular slogan of the day would have it, to be "pro-choice."

But dignity as it is used by supporters of assisted death has a second meaning, one that is decidedly illiberal and far more judgmental than the rhetoric of choice would suggest. When advocates appeal to human dignity they not only defend a

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person's right to choose assisted suicide; they also implicitly suggest who in particular might want or need to exercise this option. It is those who supposedly lack dignity.

In the literature, for instance, one finds references to those who, consumed by their diseases, are "undignified" and "humiliated," to those for whom life has become nothing but "meaningless existence with no escape." Consider along these lines a remark by Quill and his co-authors Christine K. Cassel and Diane E. Meier in the *New England Journal of Medicine*:

> The risks and burdens of continuing with the current prohibitions [against physician-assisted dying] have been less clearly articulated in the literature. The most pressing problem is the potential abandonment of competent, incurably ill patients who yearn for death despite comprehensive comfort care. These patients may be disintegrating physically and emotionally, but death is not imminent.... In fact, there is no empirical evidence that all physical suffering associated with incurable illness can be effectively relieved. In addition, the most frightening aspect of death for many is not physical pain, but the prospect of losing control and independence and of dying in an undignified, unesthetic, absurd, and existentially unacceptable condition.

So the noble language of death with dignity, of the sovereign right to choose what is best for oneself, has its underside, an implicit valuation of the kinds of life that are supposedly not worth living—life, for example, that is characterized by dependency, or life that is "undignified, unesthetic, absurd ... existentially unacceptable," as the doctors put it.

This hidden judgment is made somewhat more explicit by Dworkin, who argues that one reason many people want to die is that their lives have ceased to have meaning for them. This is surely true, but then Dworkin offers a startling quote from Nietzsche to back up the point: "'In a certain state it is indecent to live longer. To go on vegetating in a cowardly dependence on physicians and machinations, after the meaning of life, the right to life, has been lost, *that ought to prompt a profound contempt in society*.'" Dworkin did not italicize the last clause, but I have done so to emphasize what he ignores: In a society that allows doctor-assisted death, valuations of what is a dignified and meaningful life, and what is an undignified and meaningless life, will be made, inevitably, not just

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by the individual whose life is at stake but, as Nietzsche urged, by the larger society.

The importance of this last point justifies including the entire passage from which Dworkin selectively quotes—it comes from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*. The passage begins, ominously enough, "The sick man is a parasite of society," and leads into Dworkin's abbreviated quotation, ending with this:

> The physicians, in turn, would have to be the mediators of this contempt—not prescriptions, but every day a new dose of nausea with their patients. To create a new responsibility, that of the physician, for all cases in which the highest interest of life, of ascending life, demands the most inconsiderate pushing down and aside of degenerating life—for example, for the right to procreation, for the right to be born, for the right to live.

Who is to die?

I do not for a moment believe that those who support assisted death intend to become what Nietzsche calls the "mediators" of contempt towards those who are less fortunate, and I do not think that they intend to create for themselves what he calls "a new responsibility," that of the physician who kills in the interest of "ascending life." However, signs of intellectual ferment, pointing in unsavory directions, are not absent.

I have already mentioned how the rhetoric of choice masks a judgment that some life is without dignity and thus warrants assisted death. Another troubling feature of the literature in favor of assisted death is that it appeals to the crude self-interest of the caregiver. Assisted death might ease a patient's demise, in some cases; what troubles is that it certainly makes life easier for a caregiver, freeing him from his responsibilities. Judge Reinhardt in his decision in favor of assisted suicide even elevated the issue of burdened caregivers to a constitutional right. He observed that a dying patient has a liberty interest in being permitted to ensure that friends and family have a happy memory of him, which is but another way of suggesting that assisted suicide can be a way that caregivers avoid memories of ailing relatives and time lost tending to them. Some defenders of assisted suicide do not even hide

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the point; they appeal directly to caregivers. That's what Kevorkian did when he first tried to sell assisted suicide to the American people. He took out a classified ad in a newspaper which read: "IS SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY TERMINALLY ILL? Does he or she wish to die—and with dignity? CALL PHYSICIAN CQNSULTANT."

Then there is the question of how far advocates of physician-assisted suicide intend to take their agenda. The Oregon Death With Dignity Act, reports Shavelson, was based upon a physician-assisted-suicide proposal co-authored by Quill and published in 1992 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Quill and his co-authors proposed legalizing physician-assisted suicide but opposed taking the more radical step of legalizing "voluntary euthanasia." In both cases, the physician kills at the request of the patient. But in the former case, the physician provides the means of death only, while in the latter, the physician is "the actual agent of death." Quill and his co-authors favored allowing a doctor to prescribe a lethal dose of medicine to a patient but rejected allowing a doctor to take part actively in the killing. They judged the latter too risky, given the opportunity it would open for doctors, family members, and institutions to put a patient to death without his consent. "Voluntary" euthanasia is, it seems, not likely to be so voluntary.

But voluntary euthanasia is the end game, and not only for the terminally ill. In his book *A Midwife Through the Dying Process*, Quill states that though there are important practical differences between physician-assisted suicide on the one hand and voluntary euthanasia on the other, "I don't believe these acts are morally distinct." In an interview with Shavelson, Quill went a step further, arguing that

> in point of fact [for a physician to perform] euthanasia for the patient is probably a more humane act than simply giving them the pills to do their own suicide. It's a disaster when people reach a point where they've gone through the whole process, made the decision, taken the pills, and then something happens and it doesn't work.

So, as it turns out, voluntary euthanasia is preferable to physician-assisted suicide. As for who is eligible for assisted death, Quill holds that it "should initially be restricted" to the

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terminally ill; but he suggests that it should eventually, once the proper precautions are in place, be made available to the "incurably ill" who are not terminal. The "slippery slope" from assisted suicide to voluntary euthanasia, and from the terminally ill to those who are incurably ill but not terminal, is by design. It is no figment of the imagination of critics. The experience in the Netherlands, where physician-assisted suicide is already an accepted medical practice, confirms that the slide is inevitable. As Herbert Hendin notes in his book *Seduced by Death*, the Dutch government itself reports that more than a thousand patients per year are killed without their consent by Dutch doctors.

True confessions

The evident willingness to kill is one of the most troubling sides of assisted death. Literature in favor of it frequently features authors' confessions to suicides they have aided or witnessed. Shavelson, an emergency-room physician, writes of how he "slipped the black plastic bag over Renee's head, and tucked it into her shirt at the neck. For two minutes, the bag rose and fell with her breathing. Then all was still." He ends his book wondering whether he will have to help his parents to their deaths. In an anonymous essay published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a gynecologist describes his treatment of a 20-year-old girl dying of ovarian cancer:

> The patient was tired and needed rest. I could not give her health, but I could give her rest. I asked the nurse to draw 20 mg. of morphine sulfate into a syringe. Enough, I thought, to do the job.... Debbie looked at the syringe, then laid her head on the pillow with her eyes open, watching what was left of the world. I injected the morphine intravenously and watched to see if my calculations would be correct.... With clocklike certainty, within four minutes the breathing rate slowed even more, then became irregular, then ceased.... It's over, Debbie.

Stephen Jamison, an adjunct faculty member at the University of California, San Francisco, and author of *Final Acts of Love*, describes how assisted suicide, if properly done, can be a positive experience. Here's his account of how Dennis, who suffered from prostate cancer, was assisted to his death by his

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wife Grace and four close friends: "'Like a birth, a death is not an easy thing,' Grace told me.... 'I felt no guilt or regret; this was a sacred time only affected by the uncertainty of how long it would take.'" Jamison comments that the manner in which Grace and her friends eased Dennis to his death "provided the necessary ritual to move it from the realm of helping to die to that of spiritual birthing. Together, they took on the common role of midwife and molded this experience into something personally transformative." Quill too was apparently transformed by the experience of assisting a suicide. His participation in Diane's suicide stretched him "profoundly," he notes several times in *Death and Dignity*. It was "a defining moment for me," he writes, one that, in his judgment, made him a better doctor and a better person: "I now have a much deeper and more personal appreciation of what might be possible between doctor and patient under such adverse circumstances."

I would suggest that such confessions serve the purpose of breaking down societal prohibitions against killing; they take the taboo out of the commandment, thou shalt not kill. It is not entirely beyond imagination that the door could eventually be cracked open to what Kevorkian christened "obitiatry," medical experiments on the dying. The following oblique remark was made not by Kevorkian but by Quill and his co-authors in their *New England Journal of Medicine* article advocating assisted suicide:

> In physician-assisted suicide, a lethal amount of medication is usually prescribed that the patient then ingests. Since this process has been largely covert and unstudied, little is known about which methods are the most humane and effective. If there is a change in policy, there must be an open sharing of information within the profession, and a careful analysis of effectiveness.

In the new world of assisted death, doctors and scientists will publish peer-review articles on the most efficient way to kill, it seems.

A better way

What is truly strange about the push to legalize assisted death is that it comes from the liberal camp. When Dworkin along with several other philosophers filed a brief with the

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Supreme Court in favor of assisted suicide, the *New York Times* identified them as "six leading lights of the liberal tradition." The *Times*, the liberal paper of record, has itself editorialized in favor of physician-assisted suicide. In contrast, the *Times* condemns capital punishment on the usual liberal ground that the innocent might be executed and, more fundamentally, because it is simply "barbaric." But the danger of putting to death the innocent will be much greater once physicians are licensed by the state to kill behind closed doors, out of reach of whatever liberal safeguards of due process and fairness might be enacted. If only as a practical matter, the right to die (which, "technically" speaking, creates a right to kill too) will be exercised by—or, more precisely, forced upon—the most vulnerable in our society. What could be more barbaric than that, killing the old and the sick and the suffering (even if their consent is supposedly obtained)? Much more in accord with the best of our liberal principles of equality and liberty would be to see to it that every such person receives quality palliative care, not technology's entangling tubes and wires and not doctor-administered death.

That's an attainable and worthy goal. As much as medical science and technology contribute to end-of-life suffering, they also hold out the possibility of new generations of pain medications and improved palliative care for the sick and dying. That plus a medical ethic that knows when to cease treatment may be our best option. In the meanwhile, we should aim at muddling through, making adjustments on a patient-by-patient basis. It's not the ideal, of course. But it's better than the alternative—doctors who kill under the guidance of a deadly compassion and an abstract theory of dignity.

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Moral reform—learning from the past

JOEL SCHWARTZ

A HALLMARK of contemporary conservative thought is that poverty can be reduced most effectively or even only through character training and the creation of moral communities. Thus it is argued that poverty will be lessened only to the extent that a work ethic is inculcated among inner-city residents and stable, two-parent married families again become the norm there. In short, individual attitudes and behavior will need to be transformed; and that transformation is most likely to be accomplished not by government programs but by private, faith-based charities.

In an important sense, this approach marks (appropriately for conservatives) a return to the past. Moral reformation or transformation was a crucial component of the antipoverty strategy of numerous deeply religious social reformers of the nineteenth century, who attempted—putting it baldly—to make the poor less poor by making them more virtuous. Their story has been told in Marvin Olasky's influential book, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. It provides a useful overview of

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American antipoverty efforts from colonial times to the present, emphasizing the successes of endeavors by private religious charities in the past, as contrasted with the failures of governmental efforts in the present.

Olasky's book has won great acclaim from conservatives: Newt Gingrich "commend[s it] to everyone," and William Bennett has described it as "the most important book on welfare and social policy in a decade." Although Olasky's work has been harshly attacked by the Left, even one of his critics concedes that it "helps to call attention to the spiritual dimension of charity—the changes of heart in those who would help and those who would be helped—that may have to underlie any fully successful reform of society." Olasky deserves great credit for resurrecting the views of intelligent reformers of the past, whose insights are relevant to antipoverty efforts today. Furthermore, his central point is correct: American social policy needs to address the moral condition of the poor, and it has failed in the past, spectacularly, because it has been lamentably skittish about even attempting to do so.

Lessons from the past

But once one agrees about the importance of aiming at moral improvement, the crucial issue becomes how (not whether) to effect it. Here, unfortunately, Olasky's work is less successful. When one thinks through the legacy of the nineteenth century's moral reformers, an important, but perhaps unwelcome, lesson emerges. According to the reformers' own testimony, moral reformation is hard to effect, for three reasons. First, reformers often deliver their message ineffectively, seeming to attack those whom they wish to remoralize. Secondly, the religious and cultural heterogeneity of the poor often makes it hard for reformers to appeal to the poor in God's name: Religious appeals are easily (and appropriately) resisted when they seem aimed at proselytization, conversion of the poor from their own faith to the reformers'. Finally, in the nature of things, transforming adults who misbehave into paragons of virtue (or even average citizens) is an outcome that is devoutly to be wished, but seldom achieved. In short, while it would be nice if moral reformation were easy to implement, the historical evidence suggests that it is not.

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Disheartening as that conclusion may be, it should not be surprising to conservatives. If conservatives reverence the past and stress the need to maintain traditional moral standards, they also believe that constructive change is hard to introduce: And, on the face of it, dramatic moral transformations would seem particularly difficult to effect.

A thoughtful reading of the nineteenth-century reformers yields another important point. Although contemporary conservatives rightly celebrate the moral teachings of the nineteenth-century moral reformers, these reformers were not themselves conservative in one crucial respect: If—in a crude but common division of the political spectrum—conservatives are those who want to improve people's morality while liberals are those who want to improve the material environment in which they live, the moral reformers can plausibly be seen as forerunners of contemporary liberalism. They recognized not only that moral reformation of the poor is hard to achieve but that it is unlikely to be successful in every material environment.

In this essay, I will examine these difficulties; more broadly, I hope that an exploration of past reformist thought will encourage conservatives as well as liberals to think more deeply about what moral reformation entails and how it can (and cannot) best be achieved. For the issue, again, is not so much what to do as how to do it. All of us—liberals as well as conservatives—need to think harder about how (and how not) to encourage self-advancing attitudes and behaviors among the poor. To that end I will discuss the successes and failures of past reformist attempts to do so.

Specifically, I will look at the beliefs and activities of four important nineteenth-century charity workers, the last three of whom are discussed and praised by Olasky: the Reverend Joseph Tuckerman (1778-1840), a Unitarian who became America's first notable social worker, serving as minister at large to the poor of Boston in the 1820s and 1830s; Robert M. Hartley (1796-1881), who founded New York's Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP) in 1843 and was its guiding spirit for over 30 years; Charles Loring Brace (1826-1890), who in 1854 established New York's Children's Aid Society—an organization dedicated to assisting the city's vagrant children—and headed it until his death; and Josephine

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Shaw Lowell (1843-1905), who was the leading theoretician of New York's Charity Organization Society, which she helped found in 1882.

Messages and messengers

How ought reformers to approach those among the poor whom they seek to improve morally? Olasky praises the moral reformers of yesteryear for adopting a "tough love" attitude: That is, they made legitimate moral demands upon the poor without despising or degrading them. But tough love is presumably a virtuous mean between the vicious extremes of excessive harshness (too tough) and excessive softness (too loving, in a sentimental, undemanding way). In practice, it is reasonable to ask, how well did the reformers live up to the "tough love" standard? Their record was more mixed than Olasky is willing to acknowledge.

So far as we can tell, Tuckerman beautifully embodied "tough love" in his interactions with the poor. Such, at any rate, was Tocqueville's judgment, based upon his meetings with Tuckerman during his visit to the United States in 1831. Tocqueville praised Tuckerman for being both loving and tough: "If his kindness for [the poor] is extreme, it must not be believed that his severity, whenever just or necessary, is less manifested: the poor love him, because he is their benefactor, and they respect and fear him, because they know the austerity of his virtue."

Tuckerman appears to have manifested genuine respect for the poor in his interactions with them. He believed that "the minister of the poor can never be authoritative, harsh, severe, or reproachful in manners or in language," and he strove to live up to this injunction. In one instance, visiting a married couple (the husband "a journeyman mechanic and abundantly able to provide for his family if he would but give up the use of strong drink"), he saw the husband "lying upon the bed in the deep sleep of thorough intoxication." Returning on another occasion, Tuckerman did not accuse the man, "did not say to [him], 'I saw you drunk upon your bed.'" Instead, he "addressed him with the respect due to a man, and the interest due to a brother." The man subsequently assured Tuckerman that "he would not taste any intoxicating drink till he should

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see me on the next Sunday."

Tuckerman's story had a happy outcome, as the man ceased drinking, and the family emerged from poverty. The wife told Tuckerman, "I have now been married twenty years; and in all those years I have not been so happy as I have been during the last three months." Tuckerman ended his account with the following rhetorical question: "Had I treated this man otherwise than with respect, and sympathy, how would he have received me, and how would he have treated my endeavors to reclaim him from intemperance?"

As the preceding quotation suggests, Tuckerman believed that the success of moral reform depends largely on how it is undertaken. Thus one sort of approach, he suggested, is sure to fail—even if its proponent is "by no means deficient in general knowledge, or in earnestness for the cause and kingdom of Christ, or in the qualities of character which command respect—of a certain kind." Nevertheless, such a man might well be unable to speak to the poor

> of their moral and religious condition, and prospects, except in a manner which could hardly fail to produce a shrinking in the timid; and to make the hardy in sin, through mere opposition to him, more strongly determined in wrong-doing. His views of human nature, and of unregenerated human beings, [would] ma[k]e him ... repulsive to those whom he considered sinners.

To succeed, Tuckerman concluded, a moral reformer must instead look "not only to desirable results, but to the means required by common sense, and by some knowledge of the common workings of the human heart, for acting upon human beings in the circumstances in which we are thus called to act upon them."

Unfortunately, those seeking the moral reformation of the poor have not always lived up to Tuckerman's standard or heeded his advice. In fact, Tuckerman's observations on how *not* to attempt moral reform point effectively to the rhetorical shortcomings of a second important reformer, Robert Hartley. Although Hartley's AICP enjoined its agents against "all appearance of harshness, and every manifestation of an obtrusive and censorious spirit," Hartley himself does not seem to have lived up to this instruction.

The rhetoric directed by Hartley, unlike Tuckerman, at the

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poor was harsh; it must sometimes have been counterproductive. He spoke so harshly of the poor in part because they were alien to him: The poor served by the AICP—whose members were mostly native-born Protestants—were predominantly foreign-born and Catholic. Thus in 1852 Hartley noted that "most of the destitution is among foreigners. If the relieved were divided into eight parts, as near as can be estimated, four parts would be Irish, three German and miscellaneous, and but one part American. If divided according to religion, it would be found that at least three-fourths of those asking aid are Roman Catholics."

America's interactions with its poor have always been complicated by ethnic distinctions dividing the poor—more precisely, the most visible, urban poor—from the nonpoor. That is obviously true of the minority poor today, and it was equally true of the immigrant poor a century ago. Certainly Hartley was not sympathetic to the immigrant poor. Consider this sample of his rhetoric:

> "*We can find no work*," is the ready plea of many who ask aid. This may be so, but the plea would come with better grace from many females, after cleaning their own intolerably filthy tenements, and mending their own and children's garments, that are hanging in tatters for want of timely repair. How can we believe you desire work, when you neglect that which thrusts itself on your notice every moment, and the commonest decency requires you to do? It is unreasonable to expect others to trust you with their work, when you so shamefully neglect your own. And because of your disgustingly filthy and ragged appearance, respectable people will not employ you. The cleanly, the industrious, and the sober, readily find work where persons of your description would not be endured. Many of you, therefore, can only blame yourselves that you have no employment. And should we, knowing these things, and our fruitless efforts for your reform, encourage your vile habits by ministering to your relief?

An address like this could not possibly have encouraged reformation. And Hartley's rhetorical excesses are all the more lamentable because the counterproductive, self-destructive behavior that he attacked was only too real: Large numbers of Irish immigrants did indeed live irregular lives that perpetu-

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ated and worsened the poverty from which they suffered.[1]

Hartley's remarks illustrate a real rhetorical problem, which needs to be acknowledged and addressed by advocates of remoralizing the poor today. It is important to criticize—flatly and unapologetically—self-destructive and immoral behavior that worsens the plight of the poor; but if the criticism is to have any hope of improving behavior, it must be addressed in such a way that the poor themselves are not treated contemptuously.

This injunction becomes doubly important when religious, ethnic, or cultural divides separate reformers from the objects of their reformation. It is true that we should not stifle all criticism of self-destructive behavior for fear that it amounts to "blaming the victim"; incalculable damage has been done to the poor by the refusal to address the real damage sometimes brought about by their own actions. But at the same time, there is a genuine distinction between constructive and destructive criticism that must also be kept in mind. In other words, the actions of reformers—not just the efforts of those whom they would reform—can be self-defeating.

The virtues that Hartley preached—diligence, sobriety, and thrift—were and are genuine virtues, whose adoption would benefit the poor. In a 1997 article in the *City Journal*, William J. Stern showed that when virtues like these were preached to the Irish Catholic poor by a coreligionist like Archbishop John Hughes, they had much impact in altering self-defeating behavior. The message of virtue is universal, but it still makes a difference who the messenger is and how he words it: One can certainly believe that many of Hartley's Irish Catholic auditors would have concluded that to be diligent, sober, and thrifty was to "act English" (just as self-advancing behavior—studying hard, being sexually continent—is occasionally derided in the black ghettos of today as "acting white").

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[1] For a useful overview, see Thomas Sowell's chapter on the Irish in *Ethnic America: A History*. Sowell notes that "the 'laziness' or 'improvidence' of the Irish became a familiar refrain among contemporaries in Ireland—and later in America—and among sympathizers as well as critics, both scholarly and popular." He also mentions that "drunkenness was common," that "patterns of alcoholism and improvidence of the Irish immigrants in America often reduced them to living on charity when hard times came."

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In sum, it is insufficient to celebrate the ends at which moral reform aims, important and worthy as those ends undoubtedly are. Because the medium is an essential part of the moral message, moral reform can be undertaken in ways that are guaranteed to ensure its failure. If our praise for moral reform is to ring true, we need to acknowledge that those who would improve the poor can sometimes err grievously by attacking them.

Difficulties of religious reformation

In Olasky's view, the moral reformers can more accurately be understood as religious reformers. Their moral vision, he would argue correctly, flowed directly from their belief in God. Thus he speaks of the belief that "the most important need of the poor who were unfaithful was to learn about God and God's expectations for man," and he alludes to the AICP's emphasis on "piety" as well as "frugality and industry" as a remedy for poverty. Furthermore, in discussing the twentieth-century rejection of the moral approach to poverty, Olasky harshly criticizes settlement houses for excluding religion: "Out went the hymns and testimonies and in came political action."

But these remarks gloss over genuine difficulties that the nineteenth-century antipoverty reformers were well aware of, difficulties with which they wrestled (though not altogether successfully). Olasky's notion of piety is too abstract: It ignores vital differences among religious denominations. Readers of Pascal will remember that the God of the philosophers differs from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but readers of Olasky are given no occasion to consider that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob tended to be understood somewhat differently by the reformers (Protestants) than by those who were to be reformed (Jews and especially Catholics).

This difficulty, already evident in Tuckerman's time, is chiefly responsible for the secular tone of the settlement houses that Olasky decries. If Jane Addams' Hull-House was determinedly nondenominational, it was not because Addams herself was irreligious (at least when she founded it in 1889): In fact, she argued then that Hull-House was "better" than a rival New York settlement house, because it was "more distinctively Christian and less Social Science." So why did Hull-House

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deemphasize religion? Because Addams was Protestant, and the large majority of those she hoped to serve were Catholics and Jews. A seriously religious settlement house (that is, one devoted to espousing the spiritual views of a particular denomination) could not possibly have appealed to the immigrant clientele on the West Side of Chicago.

But the situation faced by Addams was no different from that confronted by the nineteenth-century reformers, who accordingly made comparable attempts to secularize their philanthropy. Reformers like Hartley, Brace, and Lowell were acutely aware that it would be counterproductive to preach Protestant piety to the Catholic poor. In the words of historian Paul Boyer, "With the immigrant population becoming increasingly Roman Catholic, the sectarian coloration" of earlier efforts to moralize the urban poor "came to be seen as a liability, and it was played down by the new generation of urban reformers"—specifically, by Hartley and Brace.

As early as Tuckerman's time, the split between Protestant reformers and a largely Catholic poor thought to be in need of moral reformation posed obvious difficulties. Most notably, it precluded any serious attempt at instilling piety in poor people of a different denomination. Although Tuckerman lived and worked before the huge influx of Irish Catholics into Boston, some of the poor with whom he dealt were nevertheless Catholic. He had the good sense to recognize that "*We as Christian* [i.e., Protestant] *ministers can accomplish comparatively little good*" working with the Catholic poor; he accordingly met with the Catholic bishop of Boston in an effort to set up a lay Catholic ministry for the Catholic poor.

Responding to the problems posed by denominational differences, the Protestant reformers explicitly deemphasized the religious character of their work. Although Hartley was a deeply religious man, accurately described by one historian as "intensely evangelical," he also took pains to declare that the "design" of the AICP was "economical and moral, rather than religious—more preventive than remedial." We can reasonably suppose that Hartley rejected religious reformation as the goal of the AICP in part because he correctly realized that most of the poor whom he hoped to elevate professed a religion different from his own. Moral reform had

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to be secular—"economical and moral, rather than religious." Denominational differences made any other course unthinkable.

Denominational complications

The problems that religion posed for the moral reformers emerge still more clearly in Brace's work. The Catholicism of many of the intended beneficiaries of his organization's largesse posed great difficulties for Brace—much more than they did for Hartley. This was because the centerpiece of Brace's charitable efforts was not just the transformation, but the transportation, of his clientele: Brace hoped to benefit the street urchins of New York by placing them with farm families in the Midwest, where their reformation (begun in institutions like the Children's Aid Society's lodging houses and industrial schools) would be confirmed by newly acquired familial ties, away from the temptations to immorality presented by the big city.

Brace referred to the family as "God's reformatory." Unfortunately, by that he meant not the natural families of the street urchins whom he attempted to assist (many of whom were Catholic, and by no means all of whom were orphans[2])—but their prospective rural adoptive families, virtually all of which were Protestant. Not surprisingly, many Catholics resented Brace's efforts, which they feared would culminate in the proselytization of Catholic youths. Brace, for his part, resented the Catholic suspicion of his efforts. He wrote of "the opposition ... of the bigoted poor ... undoubtedly under the influence of some of the more prejudiced priests, who suppose that the poor are thus removed from ecclesiastical influences. A class of children, whom we used thus to benefit,

[2] To judge from the available data (summarized in Miriam Z. Langsam's *Children West: A History of the Placing-Out System of the New York Children's Aid Society, 1853-1890*), just over half of the children placed by the Children's Aid Society were orphans; but almost a fourth reported both parents living, and an additional 15 percent reported one living parent. In addition, approximately 20 percent of the children who were placed seem to have been Catholic. (This is an approximate figure, because it results from an extrapolation: Langsam provides data on the children's ethnicity, not their religion.)

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are now sent to the Catholic Protectory."[3]

In effect, Brace was frustrated by the reluctance of Catholic parents to allow their offspring to receive his benefactions. But that reluctance was by no means unfounded. As Boyer has pointed out, it was hardly unreasonable of Catholic parents to fear "an urban order in which the frayed bonds of family, community, and church could be severed with a single stroke by a charitable organization determined to release slum children from the few social strands still holding them, thus granting them the ambiguous gift of total freedom."

For our purposes here, though, the central issue is the impact of the Catholicism of the poor upon Brace's philanthropy. Because so many of his potential clients were Catholic, Brace had to mute the religious instruction that he offered: The preponderance of Catholics among the poor, he observed, "compelled us to confine ourselves to the most simple and fundamental [religious] instructions, and to avoid, in any way, arousing religious bigotry." Like Tuckerman, Brace also recognized that the Catholic priesthood might remoralize the Catholic poor in a way that Protestants could not.

In other words, Brace's Children's Aid Society in practice acted as a secular charity. Its secularism is evident first in Brace's willingness to hire charity workers of no defined religious belief. And it becomes clearer still in a comment reported by the journalist and reformer Jacob Riis (a great supporter of Brace's work). Riis quoted a Children's Aid Society worker who insisted that "no Catholic child ... is ever brought to us. A *poor* child is brought and we care for it."

This statement completely abstracts from religion: It could be spoken by a staffer at an altogether secular contemporary charity like the Children's Defense Fund. But the statement also perfectly exemplifies the dilemma faced by the Protestant moral reformers. Because Catholics and Protestants worship God in different ways, charities that were compelled to be nonsectarian could not promote piety in any serious way.

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[3]Brace disliked the Catholic Protectory not simply (or, in fact, primarily) because it was Catholic but because it was an institution. Brace firmly believed that children received better training (because they became more self-reliant) when brought up in a family rather than an institution.

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Brace himself was an intensely religious man. Nevertheless, good reasons explain why Brace's confederate had to ignore religion by emphasizing the poverty, rather than the Catholicism, of the children whom he served. Instead, Protestant reformers had to soft-pedal religion while emphasizing what in effect was a secular (or at least an ecumenical) moral consensus: In that long-ago era, Catholics, Protestants, Jews (and for that matter, atheists) could all agree that the virtues of diligence, sobriety, and thrift were preferable to their opposites.

This historical excursion is not intended to deny either the importance or desirability of the work done by faith-based charities to achieve moral reformation. Nevertheless, such work would undoubtedly be easier and more effective if all of us shared the same faith. But we don't, and we never have. (Recall the joke in which two ministers of rival denominations meet; one says to the other, "We've both been doing the Lord's work, you in your way, and I in—His.") Today, as in the past, religious pluralism inevitably complicates efforts to transform people's lives through faith. The example of the moral reformers should remind us that this is not a problem that suddenly emerged in the last 30 years, fueled by aggressive secularism, heightened ethnic consciousness, and doubts about the universality of the moral virtues.

Skepticism about rehabilitation

Olasky applauds the moral reformers for insisting that recipients of charitable aid had "an obligation to change" the behaviors thought to be responsible for their impoverishment; he celebrates "the challenge to change" self-destructive behavior, and denigrates any "subsidy of sordidness." In no way do I quarrel with Olasky's declaration of what charities ought to try to do; still, it is noteworthy that his statements skirt the issue of the ease and frequency with which it can be done. In fact, when one examines the reformers' evaluations of their own activities, it is striking how dubious they were about their capacity to reform the misbehaving adult poor. An undercurrent of skepticism about the likelihood of genuine moral rehabilitation runs throughout the reformers' writings.

A fair generalization would be that the earlier reformers—

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Tuckerman and Hartley—were more confident of the possibility of rehabilitation than their successors. Still, even Tuckerman and Hartley were clearly aware that in practice rehabilitative efforts were often doomed to failure.

Tuckerman often expressed great optimism about moral reformation. (For that reason, Tocqueville gently mocked his belief that "a day will appear, when, all the wicked having been regenerated, prisons will no longer be wanted.") Yet he was still remarkably cautious in his estimation of what could be accomplished, declaring only that "there may be at least an apparently real restoration," even in a "desperate" case.

Like Tuckerman, Hartley possessed a millennial streak; he believed in the possibility of universal reformation, at least in the long run. Hartley's millennialism is most evident in his 1856 declaration that

> the masses, beginning with the individual, are improvable. They can be improved physically, morally and intellectually. And if the individual can be reclaimed, why not the masses? Who will affirm of any living man that he is irreclaimable?

But in practice, it was Hartley himself who affirmed that some men are irreclaimable. He believed that "little is to be hoped from any reformatory efforts" directed at "grossly immoral" adults. That pessimism is apparent even in the millennial passage quoted above, which concluded with these words: "If there is less hope of adults, there is greater hope of children, who are the promise of the future."

This theme of irredeemable adults and reformable children was central to Brace's outlook as well. Brace unambiguously proclaimed the futility of attempting to rehabilitate adults. He founded the Children's Aid Society precisely because he despaired of doing so:

> I became convinced that no far-reaching and permanent work of reform could succeed among [the unfortunate and criminal population]. It was right that those who loved humanity in its lowest forms should labor for the forlorn prostitute, and the mature criminal. But on a broad scale no lasting effects could be expected to society from such efforts. The work seemed like pouring water through a sieve. The hopeful field was evidently among the young. There, crime might possibly be checked in its very beginnings, and the seed of future good character and order and virtue be widely sown.

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Brace's view was shared by Lowell, who proclaimed in 1898 that "the most important work to be done among the poor is for the children." She went on to add, "I am almost inclined to declare that nothing else is of any importance at all, as compared with it, for every other branch of charitable work produces but small results and for only short periods of time."

At issue here are not simply the particular beliefs of Brace and Lowell. More broadly, it is important to realize that American social policy's emphasis on the importance of reforming the young—an emphasis already apparent in efforts undertaken by Tuckerman to assist wayward children, and still evident in the hopes placed in a contemporary program like Head Start—amounts to a tacit concession of the likely incorrigibility of self-destructive adults. The historian Stephan Thernstrom once expressed this view pungently, speaking of "the old American belief that the adults can go to hell so long as you do something to rescue the kids."

The comparatively greater ease of forming children (as opposed to reforming adults) relates to a second important belief of the moral reformers—that prevention is easier to effect than cure. The importance of prevention—and the concomitant difficulty of cure or rehabilitation—was a theme that Lowell in particular emphasized. In one paper she went on at some length about the importance of creating institutions to reform vagrant and wayward girls and young women, "to convert them, to make them take an entirely different view of life, of themselves and of the world." Abruptly, though, at the end of the paper Lowell reversed herself, discounting the likelihood (and even the importance) of the reformation that she herself had been arguing for: "But after all it is not by means of such institutions ... that we shall finally succeed in really diminishing the number of unhappy women who need 'reformation.'" Instead, she emphasized prevention—"mak[ing] the life of wage-earners less hard." It was more important to alter the conditions that led women to go bad than to reform them once they had gone bad.

Elsewhere Lowell was to develop the contrast between prevention and rehabilitation, declaring that the "preventive" work of charity organizations was "by far" more "valuable and ... encouraging" than the "curative" work. Because curative or

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rehabilitative work was "difficult" and "disheartening," it was important instead "to start from the beginning to *prevent* pauperism rather than to wait until it has assumed gigantic proportions, and then try to crush it."

To say that moral rehabilitation is unlikely is not, of course, to say that it is impossible. In that respect Olasky is right to criticize charities that spurn moral uplift altogether, thereby virtually assuring that rehabilitation will not occur. Furthermore, even the reformers who discounted rehabilitation acknowledged that it occasionally took place. Thus, while Brace declared that working for adult reformation was "like pouring water through a sieve," he also recounted the example of one Orville (nicknamed "Awful") Gardner, a prizefighter whose case, he claimed, showed "the reforming power of Christianity on the most abandoned characters."

Still, it is important to realize that the reformers' hopes for moral rehabilitation of the fallen were on the whole remarkably muted. We hear much today of the wonders that might be worked (and are being worked) by faith-based charities. I would like to believe that religious charity workers today are achieving successes that were mostly denied their predecessors; but a glance at the historical record suggests that caution is indicated. In an age that took faith far more seriously than it is generally taken today, reformers who were deeply religious and deeply intent on effecting moral improvements doubted that their efforts redeemed many of the dissolute.

Matter and morals

The nineteenth-century reformers certainly believed that the moral virtue of the poor would render their poverty less onerous; but they also thought that material improvements might have to be made before large numbers of poor people could reasonably be expected to act virtuously. The Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht cynically asserted, *"Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral"* (first comes eating, and morality comes only thereafter). The moral reformers were anything but cynical; surprisingly, though, in some respects they agreed with Brecht.

Olasky oversimplifies the moral reformers' views here, exaggerating the contrast between their position and that of

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their more environmentally attuned successors in the early twentieth century. He criticizes a novelist named Hall Caine for writing that "people are better housed, and for that reason, among others, their morality has improved." Olasky takes Caine to task for believing that "the primary cause of immorality was not sin, but lack of housing projects."

Housing projects in and of themselves will not eliminate sin or somehow render sin irrelevant as a cause of human misery; the moral reformers never made that error. But it is not unreasonable to suppose, as the moral reformers did, that preaching salvation to the miserably destitute will do them little good. Olasky writes that compassion should not mean "accepting wrongful activity and postponing any pressure to change until the person [is] in a good environment"; but as a prudential judgment, it may well make sense to believe that people must be "in a good [or at least not in a terrible] environment" before they will reform their self-destructive behaviors.

At any rate, that was the judgment of the moral reformers. Thus Tuckerman believed that "religious instruction ... forms but one, though without doubt the most important," part of the service of the ministry of the poor. It formed only one part because physical wants "must not, and by a mind which has any of the benevolence of the gospel cannot, be disregarded; for how can we hope to make religious impressions, or to exert religious influences upon the soul, while the half-clad, shivering starving body asks for fuel, or for food, or for a garment as the greatest of blessings?" Similarly, Lowell endorsed environmental and structural reforms—"mak[ing] the lives of wage-earners less hard"—as the most effective means to a moral end, decidedly more effective than moral rehabilitation itself. (For the same reason, she was a great supporter of labor unions, and she endorsed William Jennings Bryan's presidential candidacy.)

In short, Lowell attempted to use what might today be considered "liberal" means (improving the material environment of the poor) to achieve "conservative" ends (improving their character). We may surmise that she would have been uncomfortable with much of the contemporary debate over poverty, in which partisans on the right and the left too often

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argue as though a moral and a material focus are mutually exclusive.

But the real question regarding the interplay of material and moral factors arose with respect to housing—the very issue on which Olasky takes Caine to task. A stringent critic of the moral failings of the poor, Hartley nevertheless believed that moral reform could be achieved only after improvements were made in the environment in which they lived; yet Hartley's environmentalist side is completely ignored by Olasky.

In fact, Hartley can sound remarkably like an advocate of the Caine view denounced by Olasky. Improved housing for the poor was, in Hartley's view, a necessary—though obviously not sufficient—condition for their moral improvement. He argued that housing reform "lies at the basis of other reforms; and as the health and morals of thousands are injured or destroyed by the influence of circumstances around them, an improvement of the circumstances in connection with other appropriate means, afford[s] the only rational hope of effectually elevating their character and condition."

Hartley developed these ideas in an 1853 AICP special report "on the sanitary condition of the laboring classes in the city of New York." Here he linked all manner of moral improvements to the housing question. For example, better housing would encourage the poor to be both thrifty and clean. The poor were made "filthy, reckless and vicious, by the force of circumstances, over which, in most cases, they have no control." Better housing would also improve sexual morality:

> The absence of all necessary accommodations in many dwellings, and the crowded state of the rooms, which defies all attempts at decency and modesty, breaks down the barriers of self-respect, and prepares the way for direct profligacy. How should members, often of different families and of different sex, sleep in the same room, nay, often in the same bed, without danger?

Bad housing was even held responsible for the intemperance of the poor: "In regard to the proneness of [the poor] to *intemperance*, it is said, 'That the dreadful depression consequent on ill health (the effect of crowded, filthy, badly ventilated dwellings), tempts these poor creatures with a force we cannot adequately appreciate, to have recourse to stimulating

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drink.'"

Hartley concluded that attempts to elevate the character of the degraded poor would be fruitless unless one "first improv[ed] their physical condition." "If many are debased," he contended, "what better could be expected from the circumstances in which they are obliged to live? Physical evils produce moral evils. Degrade men to the condition of brutes, and they will have brutal propensities and passions."

Hartley accordingly advocated building model tenements as a means to the moral elevation of the poor. Sin, rather than bad housing, may have been the cause of immorality for Hartley; but bad housing would have to be improved—in effect, by the creation of housing projects (to be run not by the government but by philanthropic investors)—if sin was to be reduced among the poor.

The poor to be housed in model tenements were not to be subsidized but were to pay a fair rent. Thus the poor would not be pauperized by such housing, since "self-reliance among the poor would not be undermined." Instead, "the prospect of a healthful, comfortable home would stimulate exertion, while its possession would exert a most salutary influence in reforming and elevating character.... An increase of physical comforts will induce a higher tone of morals, and prepare the way for the success of religious influences." Hartley would have amended Brecht, it appears, only by focusing on housing rather than food as the necessary precursor of moral improvement: *Erst kommen die Häuser, dann kommen die Moral—und die Religion.*

The model-tenement movement inaugurated by Hartley and the AICP did not solve either the moral or material problems of the poor. The movement has been persuasively criticized by both Left and Right. Critics on the left have noted that far too few model tenements were built, in large part because entrepreneurs were unwilling to accept the below-market profits that were essential if housing that was both better and more affordable was to be constructed. Critics on the right agree, differing chiefly in arguing that the market (hampered as it was by well-intentioned, but counterproductive, government regulations) was doing much to improve the housing of the poor. Both sorts of critics contend that Hartley's central

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premise—that better housing for the poor would uplift them morally—was faulty. Furthermore, the AICP's own pilot project for model tenements—a lower-Manhattan building that was constructed in 1854—failed spectacularly; it degenerated into a terrible slum that the AICP itself was to denounce (after it had changed ownership several times) as unfit for human habitation.

Thus Hartley signally failed to improve the moral character of the poor by building a model tenement for them. But at the same time, the failure of a remedy does not prove the faultiness of a diagnosis. The slum conditions denounced by Hartley (and, a generation later, by Jacob Riis) really were intolerable; it is not at all hard to believe that the filth and the overcrowding would have made it difficult, if not impossible, for families and individuals to live healthy and virtuous lives.

I am suggesting that it made a certain amount of intuitive sense for Hartley to suppose that a threshold of material provisions exists, and that it was unreasonable to expect those living beneath it to be likely to practice the moral virtues. Once housing conditions reached a certain level of adequacy, one could reasonably doubt that their further improvement would assist in moral uplift; but until that point was reached (and it certainly had not been reached in the slums that Hartley depicted), it was not at all outlandish to believe that physical improvement might be a precondition (not a cause) of moral improvement. Hartley did not come up with a workable solution to the problem of execrable tenement housing; nevertheless, his analysis of why it was a problem may well have been correct.

Celebration versus understanding

While it is easy (and to a large extent appropriate) to celebrate the moral reformers of yesteryear, it is harder, but also extremely important, to understand the ambiguities of their legacy. The cause of moral reform today is unlikely to be furthered if we ignore either the reformers' very real failings or their own sense of why their mission was difficult and problematic. But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the reformers' legacy concerns the extent to which they can legiti-

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mately be regarded as forerunners of contemporary liberalism (as opposed to, or in addition to, conservatism). Both today's liberals and today's conservatives can, I believe, profit from reconsidering the reformist legacy.

First, from both a political and a policy perspective, conservatives should not adopt a blanket attitude of condemnation regarding all proposals—including government proposals—intended to alter and improve the material environment in which poor people live. The example of the moral reformers should remind us that it is legitimate and appropriate to attempt to improve the material environment of the poor: The question should be how to do so, not whether to do so.

But liberals also need to rethink their tendency to offer knee-jerk support for structural and environmental reforms and knee-jerk hostility toward efforts aimed at moral regeneration. Here two things need to be kept in mind. To begin with, the moral reformers understood structural and environmental reform not just—or even principally—as an end in itself, but instead as a means to the end of improving and elevating human character. That moral end was and still should be crucial. From both a political and policy standpoint, liberals have done great harm (to themselves and to the poor) by at least seeming to question and attack the legitimacy of that end.

In addition, liberals should also recognize that the historical context today differs from what it was a century ago. Liberals like to charge conservatives with ignoring historical changes, but they often make the same mistake. Specifically, liberals need to acknowledge that a great many structural and environmental reforms have been undertaken in the past century. Before they were implemented, it made sense for a Hartley to suppose that environmental alterations could bring about great improvements. But today, after the material progress of the last century, it is unlikely on the face of it that additional structural or environmental reforms will make a huge difference. In short, liberals ought long ago to have come to terms with the possibility that future environmental and structural reforms will simply confirm the law of diminishing returns.

We can and obviously should continue to debate the desirability of measures designed to improve either the material or

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moral condition of the poor. However, another lesson to be learned from yesterday's reformers is that these two approaches need not be considered mutually exclusive. As we have seen, the moral reformers of the past believed in the interdependence of moral reform with structural and environmental reform. Even Hartley—the most moralistic of yesterday's reformers—understood that, in practice, moral improvement was often contingent upon an improvement in the physical circumstances surrounding the poor. By contrast, today's debate about poverty is too often sterile and counterproductive because of a shrill insistence that only *one* factor—whether moral or structural-environmental—can legitimately and properly be addressed.

But there is simply no reason to believe that we must choose between two mutually exclusive alternatives, with the poor being either wholly responsible for their plight (hence in need of nothing but moral reformation) or wholly powerless to remedy it (hence in need of nothing but material assistance). Specifically, there is no reason to suppose that the poor are wholly constrained by social and environmental forces (so that they can do nothing to improve their condition) or that they are moral actors who are altogether free (hence completely responsible for their condition, altogether capable of improving it on their own). It is far more reasonable to suppose, with Hartley, Lowell, and the other reformers, that two different sorts of factors interact: The poor are constrained by their environment, but they can still take some steps on their own to improve it.

Finally, if yesterday's reformers at their best should remind us of the need to pursue two-track antipoverty policies (aimed at both moral and material improvement), it is also worth recalling that one of those reformers—Hartley—exemplified the failings to which advocates of each sort of single-track policy are prone. Hartley was guilty of the quintessential conservative failing—harshness toward the poor; but he also laid the intellectual groundwork for the quintessential liberal failing—utopian faith in the possibilities of environmental reform. We can learn much from the successes of yesterday's moral reformers; but we can also profit by being mindful of their shortcomings and striving not to repeat them.

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The new pork barrel

PIETRO S. NIVOLA

A LITTLE more than 20 years have passed since David Stockman's famous essay, "The Social Pork Barrel," appeared in *The Public Interest*.[1] For most of those years, Stockman's description of how the federal government spent our money remained true: Congress kept adding "a billion here" and "a billion there" for every imaginable do-good project the legislators could pack into their districts.

But this is an increasingly outmoded view of the way politicians favor their constituents or clients, and of the kinds of favors those clients have come to expect. The decline in real terms of federal discretionary spending in the 1990s has limited the supply of traditional lard in the budget. And even with the slight budgetary surplus projected for 1998, it will not be easy to find the loose billions to build more roads from

[1] David A. Stockman, "The Social Pork Barrel," *The Public Interest*, Number 39, Spring 1975.

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nowhere to nowhere, or to justify B-2 bombers with no missions, or to promise a high-tech hospital for every county. A pork barrel persists, and always will, but more of it now makes use of unfunded mandates, regulatory programs, targeted tax breaks, and public facilitation of lucrative private lawsuits.

It's still your money

To understand this important change, we need to begin with an up-to-date conception of pork in American politics. Journalists and academics alike have mostly subscribed to narrow definitions. A typical example: "Pork-barreling [is] the traditional *congressional* practice of shoveling *appropriations* to your own *district*." There is more wrong with this statement than just inelegant grammar.

For a start, Congress is not the government's only distributor of selective benefits; the White House and executive agencies too relish the chance to say, "from me to you." A president running for reelection, for example, will need to secure the electoral votes of key states. He can do so by means of timely defense contracts, disaster relief, or trade deals beneficial to local industries. Likewise, an agency that has to shore up political support for its activities may well administer some of them strategically, skirting enemies but pandering to the requisite coalition of vested interests and congressional patrons. The game of distributive politics, in other words, is played by the executive as well as by the legislative branch.

Second, appropriations of funds offer only one method of distributing benefits. Countless policy decisions that are off-budget also parcel out rewards to particular groups. Expenditures for, say, irrigation projects in corn-belt states are pork for corn farmers. But so are requirements that reformulated gasoline be mixed with ethanol (a fuel made from corn).

Third, although politicians, in the words of Yale political scientist David Mayhew, love to "peel off" and attribute to themselves "pieces of governmental accomplishment," credit claiming is but one kind of motivation for the "single-minded seekers of reelection." Another powerful reflex is the desire to avoid blame or embarrassment. There are times when openly dispensing prizes and punishments might look too crass and "political." On these occasions, the trick is to get the job done

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indirectly. So, high-profile ribbon cutting gives way to stealth strategies like tucking strips of pork inconspicuously into omnibus legislation, delegating tasks to administrative bodies and special commissions, and turning individuals into the functional equivalent of "private attorneys general" with sweeping powers to sue for remedies. Whatever the method, the most clever ones are usually those that avoid the political risk of imposing a visible burden on taxpayers to cover the costs. A favorite technique for obscuring such taxation is to force third parties to pay the bill. Thus state and local governments, businesses, "unfair" foreign competitors, and numerous defendants shaken down by litigation frequently get stuck with the tab.

Fourth, resources need not be targeted geographically to yield a political payoff. Congressmen usually do welcome opportunities to divert federal dollars to their districts or states, but they also need to curry favor with outside constituencies that may be major campaign contributors or perk providers. In most Senate races, and many House contests as well, the network of political obligations to bring home the bacon extends far afield. "Home" is anywhere a candidate has left his or her IOUs. In other words, Tip O'Neill's aphorism, "all politics is local," is no longer apt. As links to local party organizations have eroded, the allegiances of legislators have moved increasingly beyond strictly parochial concerns to the agendas of *national* lobbies and pressure groups. This nationalization of influence is reflected in the pattern of congressional campaign finance. Whereas candidates once depended primarily on the backing of local constituents and state parties, they now rely heavily on external sources. The winners of recent House elections drew almost 40 percent of their contributions from political-action committees—that is, from the funding arms of national interest groups.

The result: Members of Congress serve up a rather different menu of social pork than the customary spoils that once nourished mainly hometown folks. Mounds of federal rules feed a preferred clientele at someone else's expense, and geographic differentiation is often beside the point; the main pitch is to political niche markets, the bases of which sometimes stretch from one coast to the other.

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Pork by other means

One might think that those who profess to guard the environment, protect consumers, oversee international trade, or enforce civil rights are only looking out for the common good. In fact, a number of pollution-abatement standards, product-safety rulings, trade laws, and nondiscrimination policies are vintage pork: They concentrate benefits on particular interests and spread costs to other groups or to the public at large.

For example, in order to preserve market share for producers of high-sulfur coal, the Clean Air Act of 1970 was subsequently amended to require that utilities install smokestack scrubbers even where power plants burn low-sulfur coal. The producers in three eastern states—West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio—have been the prime beneficiaries of this scheme while western states that produce cleaner fuel have had to forfeit their competitive advantage. The unnecessary drag on productivity in the electric utility industry forces rate payers to bear the cost of the regulatory subsidy to eastern coal.

In 1990, another round of revisions of the Clean Air Act called for the development of alternative automotive fuels. For a time, the Environmental Protection Agency and its congressional overseers interpreted these provisions to mean that gasoline had to be reformulated with ethanol. From the standpoint of sound environmental policy, the ethanol mandate was hard to understand. The production of this fuel distilled from corn is costly and, on a BTU basis, delivers less energy than it consumes. Its use would also worsen nitrogen-oxide emissions while offering only small reductions in volatile organic compounds and leaving unchanged the worst health-impairing pollutant: airborne particulate matter. But never mind this diffuse liability; the government's mandating the use of ethanol bolstered the feedstock's principal producers, most notably the Archer Daniels Midland Company, which had made large gifts to presidential and congressional campaigns.

Superfund, the federal government's strategy for correcting hazardous-waste disposal, has been expensive and disappointing. As of 1993, it had managed to decontaminate only 52 of its 1,320 designated sites, at an estimated median cost running to billions of dollars per cancer prevented by the removal of toxins. With that price tag, it is difficult to believe

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that such a program is a net benefit to society. Yet *someone* gains, or the sun would have set on Superfund long ago. One class of winners are the thousands of lawyers feasting on the liability litigation stirred up by the law. (Superfund relies on liability suits, replete with treble damages, to force the cleanup of waste sites.)

The situation is similar with respect to how consumer products are regulated. In other advanced countries, government certification, not civil litigation, normally decides the safety of merchandise. In the United States, a government agency's Good Housekeeping seal of approval, so to speak, often means nothing. Instead, judges and juries have the last word in thousands of tort cases, many of which purport to be punishing businesses for selling unsafe goods and services. Since these lawsuits are civil, not criminal, actions, they are seldom classified as a mode of social governance or regulation. In fact, however, that is exactly what they are. The line between public and private roles is hardly bright. "Bounty hunting" provisions, encouraging citizen suits over faulty products, have found their way into more and more statutes. A civil verdict against a maladroit company is addressing more than a personal matter. Much like an injunctive order issued by government regulators, the civil judgment supposedly serves the public purpose of deterring some perceived threat to society. Thus the ground rules of the tort system fall squarely within the purview of public policy.

But much tort litigation does not serve the public interest; rather, it ladles pork to the plaintiffs' bar. Worried that the nation's rampant liability suits might be delivering less of a deterrent against malfeasant firms than a net welfare loss for consumers, some lawmakers are again considering legislation that would cap punitive damages and limit the term of a manufacturer's liability exposure. But turning such bills into law is hard. The well-targeted political donations of trial lawyers, who depend on the existing legal system's gravy train of awards and contingency fees, appear to be part of the explanation. The fate of a modest tort-reform measure in 1995 was only the latest case in point. After more than 15 years of debate, a proposed Product Liability Fairness Act finally cleared both houses of Congress. President Clinton, evidently recep-

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tive to the tort-lawyers lobby, vetoed it.

Another part of the American regulatory regime abundantly larded with client-serving rules is the regulation of international trade. Even in this age of free trade, Congress manages to write commercial laws that contain provisions tailored to the interests of specific industries. For example, the Commerce Department can penalize imports it deems under-priced, even when the prices of these foreign products are identical to those of comparable products made in the United States. Where did this curious prerogative come from? Its origin seems to have been the offices of Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana. As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which was marking up an omnibus trade bill in 1974, Long seized the opportunity to assist a Louisiana firm that claimed it faced unfair competition from Canadian sulfur exports.

The sanctions against "unfairly" priced imports, originally crafted to aid a lone Louisiana constituent, subsequently became a favorite formula for protecting other enterprises, including every major U.S. steel company. Every few years, statutory refinements would be added, almost always at the behest of special interests. The price-regulating sections of the massive trade act of 1988 incorporate language specifically serving the needs of domestic outboard-boat-motor manufacturers, computer-chip makers, and, yes, the producers of pork products. Other portions of the law were designed to protect, subsidize, or open "market opportunities" for telecommunications equipment manufacturers, auto-parts manufacturers, processed-wood manufacturers, metallurgical coal producers, securities dealers, engineering firms, and even reapers of sunflower seeds. Of course, when trade regulators enforce these measures by imposing punitive duties on imported goods, a skewed distribution of costs and benefits unfolds: Consumers pay higher prices while a few protected domestic industries rake in extra profits.

The rights revolution

The pork barrel of trade protectionism remains more extensive than casual observers realize, but it has expanded less than another kind of distributive politicking: the special protections, preferences, loans, contracts, and jobs awarded to

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selected groups in the name of civil rights. To be sure, a spoils system was not the intent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was passed to ensure equal opportunity for all Americans. Over time, however, civil-rights regulation has come to encompass a lot more than that. In federal courts, lawsuits against alleged violations of civil rights numbered only a few hundred in 1970. Twenty-five years later, the annual total topped 19,000. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (one of several federal bureaucracies established to carry out the law) logged 88,000 complaints in 1995, up 42 percent from 1990 and 150 percent from 1979. The soaring caseloads now included novel sightings of discrimination.

Companies have been hauled into court for prejudicial acts like discharging a truck driver prone to epileptic seizures or dismissing an employee who claimed chronic "poor judgment" as a manifestation of a disability. Managers that screen prospective hires for histories of arrests, alcoholism, or drug abuse have risked similar suits. An employer who encourages a fading elderly employee to retire might be docked for "ageism." A company that declined to supply insurance coverage for infertility treatments might be considered a discriminatory workplace. So could a firm that failed to censure e-mail jokes.

Alongside this litigious feeding frenzy are approximately 160 distinct federal programs of affirmative action and set-asides attached to government procurement, grants-in-aid, and financial regulations. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs polices more than 100,000 companies and universities, or about 25 percent of private-sector employment, fostering "goals and timetables" for the hiring and promotion of particular minorities, women, and other protected classes. Recently, the EEOC has added to its traditional investigative functions the role of probation officer, monitoring corporate miscreants on an ongoing basis. Justice and Treasury Department bank regulators, among other enforcers of the Community Reinvestment Act, have leaned on lending institutions to allocate credit to minority businesses.

What explains such developments? It strains credulity to suppose that the United States is 150 percent more bigoted, sexist, and biased against the old and infirm than it was decades earlier. More plausibly, a regulatory juggernaut has gained

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momentum, even as nearly every major institution in American society tries to scale new heights of sensitivity.

Energized by innovative legal theories and by several bold enactments, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Civil Rights Act amendments of 1991, anti-bias law has fanned out to service a lengthening queue of claimants, promising them an increasingly plump rate of return on their claims. After 1991, for example, the burden of proof in cases of alleged discrimination was tilted from complainants to defendants. And the latter's liabilities multiplied as sweeping doctrines (about hostile work environments, disparate or adverse impacts, and so on) took hold. Traces of unintentional bias, which had previously elicited judicial skepticism, now became routinely actionable. The mere composition by race of an employer's payrolls, for example, could be used as *prima facia* evidence of racism, leaving the truth to the accused, not the accusers, to establish. Plaintiffs acquired incentives to file complaints: Not only would the fees of their attorneys and expert witnesses be reimbursed in multiples when prejudice was proved but compensatory and punitive damages became available, with the odds of collecting large sums significantly sweetened by the use of jury trials.

The ministration of remedies to the multitudes now classified as deserving victims has come to resemble the classic pattern of Beltway pork barreling. Hugh Davis Graham of Vanderbilt University has described this institutionalization plainly:

> The original rationale for affirmative action stressed its temporary nature. But minority constituencies have followed the standard script for successful interest groups. To protect their programs and benefits, they have entrenched themselves deeply in networks of clientele groups, legislative committees, and program agencies.

How are these networks mutually advantageous to the participants? Pecuniary considerations and political back scratching play a part. The victors in multi-million dollar court settlements and the recipients of billions in earmarked business return the favor by striving to keep their benefactors securely ensconced.

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Here to stay

Interestingly, the mutual-support networks attached to social regulatory institutions often have proven more durable than were the antediluvian "iron triangles" that handled the old pork. Part of the reason might be that the unearned income created by regulatory regimes can be more proprietary and less easily dissipated than the pickings from budgetary outlays. In the latter instance, logrolling spreads money around, often assuring a little something for everyone and no exclusive jackpot for anyone. Government regulation, by contrast, is often a cartelizing device. As the late George Stigler observed more than 25 years ago, it enables a coterie of rent-seekers to corner the market by fencing out new entrants. To the insiders, the value of delimiting entry can greatly exceed the share of booty they would be likely to receive by being mere members of a broad logrolling coalition. High stakes for the cartel motivate an enduring defense of the regulatory status quo.

Stigler's insight falls short, however. The past two decades have witnessed the deregulation of several once-cartelized industries. The Stiglerian theorem would not have predicted the revolution in airlines, railroads, trucking, telecommunications, and now electric utilities, all of which formerly had been subject to rigid restriction of entry and rates. Where regulatory cartels seem most permanent now, paradoxically, is not within economic sectors but inside the social-policy agenda. Here, examples keep accumulating.

One of Washington's seemingly immutable unfunded mandates, for instance, is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which compels state and local governments to spend some $30 billion a year to mainstream pupils with disabilities while the federal government reimburses a paltry 8 percent of the added expense. However imbalanced this program has become, formidable cadres of certified "special ed" teachers, therapists, and counselors give it ongoing reinforcement.

In higher education, private institutions, no less than public ones, have to cope with federal directives. Federal law, for instance, requires every university to make detailed annual reports on their male and female sports programs. Thanks to the added administrative costs imposed by such requirements, families pay higher tuition bills to send their children to col-

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lege. Families are being forced, in essence, to cross-subsidize a handful of aggrieved athletes and the university administrators who manage the red tape.

Or think about who gets what in health-care regulation. Scratch the surface of the 1980 budget reconciliation's Boren amendment, which dictates state Medicaid reimbursement rates for hospitals and nursing homes, and you find primarily protection for these licensed providers rather than a benefit for Medicaid recipients. Similarly, the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 was not just intended to promise employees with psychiatric disorders the same insurance coverage available to persons with other medical conditions; the law guarantees market share ("parity") for mental-health professionals. Likewise, the marketplace for labor rights has long been rigged. Who collects rent under the Davis-Bacon Act, that indestructible New Deal law that basically stipulates the payment of union wages for contractors on federal projects? The answer is not non-unionized startups (including, incidentally, many fledgling minority firms struggling to win business by tendering low bids) but organized labor and established contractors.

The anti-competitive practice of pushing racial and gender preferences in labor markets is also hard to shake. Notwithstanding recent judicial misgivings, and a flurry of state initiatives like California's Proposition 209, this much seems likely: Binding quotas for slots and contracts may be out, but less formal "benchmarks" and "sheltered bidding" will continue indefinitely. At a minimum, firms deemed by the Labor Department to lack the requisite diversity "targets" and "timetables" may well remain ineligible for federally funded work.

In the public interest?

The staying power of social regulatory pork is fortified by appeals its advocates make to "social justice." The movements for consumer safety, environmental protection, affirmative action, health-care regulation, tort damages, or trade protection invoke notions of fairness or rights. By comparison, railroads, air carriers, telephone companies, generators of electricity, and other traditionally regulated industries have had less success enshrining a God-given entitlement to regulatory succor. Their shibboleths ("assuring dependable service," "avoiding

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ruinous competition," "redeeming stranded assets," and so on) sound boring and, sooner or later, ring hollow.

The trump card played by champions of anti-pollution regulations is that all citizens have an inherent right to a pristine environment. For each newly designated class of oppressed people, emancipation is advanced by summoning the Fourteenth Amendment, rather than voicing a plea for government funding. The clinching argument in many product-liability suits seems to be that buyers should bear no responsibility for the risks they run since consumers are entitled to absolute safety. The time-honored defense of anti-dumping duties is that they redress aggrieved firms and workers victimized by foreign predators employing pauper labor. Even health-care providers secure their regulatory rents by framing them as constitutional rights. How did the Supreme Court uphold the Boren amendment's mandated reimbursement rates? By ruling that failure by the states to pay the requisite rates violates (of all things) the civil rights of medical facilities.

If the benefits of regulatory programs are presented not as special favors but as means of honoring solemn legal warrants, it is not surprising that the warrantees are often given a direct hand in the enforcement. Many social mandates, in other words, gain momentum because they deputize vigilantes. The empowerment takes various forms. Sometimes it is statutory. Almost all federal environmental laws, for example, establish private rights of action to enforce compliance. Many consumer laws do too. Statutes such as the Truth-in-Lending Act guarantee groups who successfully sue violators full recovery of attorneys fees. Because the fee-shifting rules in these laws are asymmetric, they create an incentive to sue: Defendants have to compensate plaintiffs who prevail, but plaintiffs who lose are off the hook. And because companies often cannot afford to devote months of managerial time to court proceedings, the heat is on them to settle. This pressure plows back additional rewards for the citizen suit specialists. With the government's blessing, cases commonly close when businesses simply confer on their public-interest adversaries tax-deductible gifts (a remedy called "credit projects").

Pollution-abatement cases have had a long tradition of such side payments. Of late, a doubling of class actions under the

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employment laws has opened another rich lode to mine. Here, too, various interests can become parties to the implementation process, and cash in on it. In addition to awarding significant sums to non-profit advocacy groups, settlements have dispensed a bevy of purchasing contracts and franchises to designated *for*-profit organizations, and produced a billable-hours bonanza for the contingency lawyers. The booming industry of diversity management consultants, spooning sensitivity training to corporate personnel, may owe its existence to precisely the loss of civility that follows in the wake of such litigation.

From a political standpoint, there is something magical in all this. Lots of money changes hands, depriving those outside the charmed circle but enriching some pivotal constituents. And the transfer has the appearance of a self-enforcing private transaction where the fingerprints of government coercion are faint.

Pigging out

Although the contemporary pork barrel no longer overflows with profligate appropriations, it is enormously expensive. The best recent estimate has the total cost of federal mandates and regulations approaching $700 billion. That figure is larger than the entire national output of Canada and more than the sum of U.S. personal income taxes collected each year. Extrapolating the trend in federal rule-makings, total regulatory expenses seem likely to exceed $720 billion by the year 2000. The era of big government, in other words, continues famously, only off the budget books.

Is this a problem? Surely a prosperous, civilized country should be expected to regulate harmful types of economic fraud and abuse, to reduce socially corrosive inequities, to bar morally repugnant forms of discrimination, and to protect the health and safety of its citizens. Despite the mounting costs of the policies produced by these exertions, their net worth is often impossible to measure. Even though many of them advantage certain groups while disadvantaging others, society may have decided that such uneven outcomes are just. And the fact that politicians pull in campaign funds and votes with the decisions does not, in itself, invalidate them. Pork, courtesy of other people's tax payments or of regulatory exactions, is a

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staple of politics. Without it, democratic government would lose some muscle as well as flab.

What is a bit unsettling, however, is the seeming ease or insouciance with which current political arrangements seem to crank out directives that invoke high principle to conduct, in Ambrose Bierce's phrase, "public affairs for private advantage." The old pork barrel, stuffed as it was with bricks, mortar, and macadam, at least had to be paid for with tax dollars or with deficit spending. The favoritism was explicit, concrete (often literally), and plainly priced. Even the subtler fiscal delicacy, preferential tax relief, has obvious budgetary implications, which could alert deficit hawks. Whatever else might be said about these measures, they clearly bore the signatures of elected officials, who occasionally might be asked to answer for the consequences of their actions.

The new system is murkier. Its contents consist typically of selective legal sanctions that appear budget neutral and "tax free" and that are partly under the management of unaccountable private custodians. The social regime they help enforce is presented as something close to a birthright. In contrast to spending and tax bills, no consistent effort is made to score the economic impacts of the voluminous mandates, especially those that do not emanate directly from Congress. In short, barrel after barrel of regulatory pork is being wheeled out, whetting big appetites, compliments of a corpulent government whose excess weight remains unchecked.

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Teaching the young

DAVID FRUM

IN English 102," a recent graduate of the University of Nevada at Reno reports, "we had to write a letter putting ourselves in the shoes of a gay person, like breaking the news to our parents saying we were gay, and explaining our lifestyle to them." That eye-opening announcement is not quoted in the work of Allan Bloom, Dinesh D'Souza, or Roger Kimball to expose political correctness on campus. It is from a new book by Martha Nussbaum, professor of ethics at the University of Chicago Law School. She wrote *Cultivating Humanity* [†] as a brief for the defense of the contemporary American university; but carefully read, it is more evidence of the crisis in American higher education.

Nussbaum is no stranger to the Culture Wars. She testified against the amendment to the Colorado constitution that would have barred localities from treating homosexuality as a prohibited basis for discrimination. In her latest book, she enters the fray again, with a mix of commentary on philosophic texts, educational theorizing, and interviews with college students and teachers.

Nussbaum acknowledges that the American university curriculum is indeed changing—and changing for political reasons. "New topics," she writes:

> have entered the liberal arts curricula of colleges and universities: the history and culture of non-Western peoples and of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States, the experiences and achievements of women, the history and concerns of lesbians and gay men. These changes have frequently been presented in popular journalism as highly threatening, both to traditional standards of academic excellence and to traditional norms of citizenship. Readers are given the picture of a monolithic, highly politicized elite who are attempting to enforce a 'politically correct' view of human life.

[†] Harvard University Press. 326 pp. $26.00.

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In Nussbaum's view, these criticisms of the contemporary university are not so much wrong (for her own descriptions of campus life make plain that today's university rejects both traditional standards of excellence and traditional norms of citizenship) as beside the point. If old ideals and norms have been rejected, it's because they have been held up to the bright light of inquiry and found wanting. Nussbaum conceives of herself as an intellectual explorer in the Socratic tradition. She argues for the examined life—"a life that accepts no belief as authoritative simply because it has been handed down by tradition or become familiar through habit, a life that questions all beliefs and accepts only those that survive reason's demands for consistency and for justification." But it never seems to occur to her that a genuine questioning of "all beliefs" might overturn liberal idols, as much as the traditional ones she opposes.

"In colleges and universities around the country," Nussbaum reports, "students are following Socrates, questioning their views to discover how far they survive the test of argument." She reassures parents who might be disturbed by the effects upon their young of Socratic questioning.

> To parents in contemporary America, as to parents in the time of Socrates, such developments can appear very unsettling. Argument seems like a cold strange invader into the habits of the home.... The parents of the philosophy majors at Belmont may encounter 'secular humanism' at the end of the semester, where previously there had been traditional Christianity.

But Socratic questioning might lead in directions other than "secular humanism"; indeed it can lead to distinctly illiberal truths. Certainly such questioning did not lead Socrates himself to become a 1990s-style liberal. It did not have that effect on Nietzsche either.

THIS is not to say that Socratic inquiry is necessarily a bad thing; only that it's not what Nussbaum is really interested in. One sees this in her defense of what's called multicultural education, for instance. Consider the following anecdote that she tells. "Anna was a political science major at a large state university in the Midwest. Upon graduation, she went into business.... One day, her firm assigned her to the newly opened Beijing office. What did she need to know, and how well did her education prepare her for success in her new role?"

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Good question. Here, in its entirety, is Nussbaum's reply:

> She needs to know how Chinese people think about work (and not to assume there is just one way); she needs to know how cooperative networks are formed, and what misunderstandings might arise in interactions between Chinese and American workers. Knowledge of recent Chinese history is important, since the disruptions of the Cultural Revolution still shape workers' attitudes. Anna also needs to consider her response to the recent policy of urging women to return to the home, and to associated practices of laying off women first. This means she should know something about Chinese gender relations, both in the Confucian tradition and more recently. She should probably know something about academic women's studies in the United States, which have influenced the women's studies movement in Chinese universities. She certainly needs a more general view of human rights, and about to what extent it is either legitimate or wise to criticize another nation's way of life. In the future, Anna may find herself dealing with problems of anti-African racism, and with recent government attempts to exclude immigrants who test positive for the human immunodeficiency virus. Doing this well will require her to know something about the history of Chinese attitudes about race and sexuality. It will also mean being able to keep her bearings even when she knows that the society around her will not accept her view.

It's an eye-opening list. Chinese attitudes about race and sexuality? Who but an American professor of the 1990s could itemize the subject matter useful to an understanding of China without mentioning knowledge of the Chinese language, Chinese history before 1964, Chinese literature, religion, and philosophy (except in reference to gender relations)? Who but an American professor of the 1990s could think knowledge of "academic women's studies in the United States" crucial to an understanding of the Chinese people? Nussbaum, the advocate of Socratic inquiry and multicultural education, takes no interest in anything about China except the preoccupations of a modern academic liberal.

THROUGHOUT her book, Nussbaum stumbles in just this same fashion past all the vulnerabilities of the new curriculum. In the process, it becomes clear that she is not really in the business of questioning *all* beliefs. For example, is the new curriculum an act of political advocacy or genuine openness? Nussbaum concedes that a political agenda is close to its heart, and she also defends such a politicized education.

Feminist philosophy, like women's studies generally, has devel-

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> oped in close connection with the political aims of feminism. Reflecting about issues of sex inequality is hard to separate from an interest in reform.... This does not seem to be a bad thing. To see what one takes to be an urgent human need and not to care whether that need ever gets addressed would appear to be a defect of character, a false kind of detachment that is not a virtue in the academic life.

Nussbaum is not for disinterested pursuit of truth but political "reform."

Are the advocates of the new curriculum open to, or at least tolerant of, students and teachers who hold to religious or political views that conflict with the new dogmas, especially in the realm of sex? Nussbaum admits that they are not but blames the non-radical students and teachers themselves, for stubbornly adhering to their outmoded opinions.

> Frequently the student leaders of the gay and lesbian community on a modern campus are intolerant of conservative opinion.... Intolerance of conservative thought is frequently a problem in faculty circles as well. The political right in America bears some of the blame for this situation, since its members have not always distanced themselves sufficiently from a politics of hatred and disgust; nor have they sufficiently welcomed people of diverse sexual orientations.

"Some scholars," she adds, "view debate about the morality of homosexual conduct ... as a challenge to the dignity of persons based on ignorance and prejudice.... They hold that one might legitimately study such materials as examples in the sociology of prejudice, but not as if they had equal weight with the contradictory opinion." That's not taking the conservative argument on a contentious and important matter seriously, as Socrates would have done; it's name-calling.

Does the new curriculum encourage students to feel no special attachment to their own country and their own civilization? Nussbaum denies it—but then goes on to argue that attachment to one's country and one's civilization is out-of-date. The time has come for Americans and the people of the West generally to lay aside their parochial loyalties for the sake of what Nussbaum calls "world citizenship." And the university, in her view, should see the inculcation of global loyalties as one of its essential tasks.

> Infusing world citizenship into the curriculum is a much larger project than the designing of one or two required courses. Its

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> goals can and should pervade the curriculum as a whole, as multinational, minority and gender perspectives can illuminate the teaching of many standard parts of the curriculum, from American history to economics to art history to ancient Greek literature.

IT is that last remark that perhaps best defines what is at stake in the argument over the university curriculum. The typical undergraduate education lasts eight semesters. In that short time, the student has much to learn. A semester spent on gender relations in China is a semester not spent on the poetry of Shakespeare, or the fundamentals of economics, or advanced physics. To include something is always to exclude something else. Throughout her book, Nussbaum presents examples drawn from various universities of how decisions to include and exclude are being made. Some are not so bad; others are pretty shocking.

But when you see them gathered all together—St. Lawrence College's "Cultural Encounters" program, Ethnic Studies courses at the University of California, "diversity" requirements at the University of Nevada—Nussbaum's goal becomes evident: a new type of American university graduate. We get a glimpse of him in an anecdote Nussbaum tells about a classroom discussion of African clitorectomies at St. Lawrence College.

> Some first-year St. Lawrence students do not write very well—and [the professor] is plainly distressed by this fact, spending a good deal of time correcting grammar and style. But in this course they are learning to think for themselves about these very controversial issues.

So there the new American student is: opinionated and ungrammatical, ready to argue about feminism in Africa but with only an uncertain grip on the language of Milton and Tennyson.

It's a strange defense of liberal education to pronounce oneself satisfied with this result, and even stranger to argue—as Nussbaum does—that it's a result more favorable to democratic self-government than the ideal of liberal education that prevailed until 25 years ago. It's also a strange defense of a liberal education to applaud the narrow political agendas of race and gender that dominate the American campus. And it's a strange defense of the Socratic ideal to champion a curriculum designed to maximize the possibility that students will know nothing about him. But by now, those concerned about the state of American higher education have seen a great deal that is much stranger even than all of this.

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Patriotic political science

DIANA SCHAUB

AMERICA was "founded on a rejection of Eurocentrism." So says political scientist James W. Ceaser, and he offers the following prooftext, from the *Federalist Papers*:

> The world may politically, as well as geographically, be divided into four parts.... Unhappily for the other three, Europe, by her arms and by her negotiations, by force and by fraud, has in different degrees extended her dominion over them all. Africa, Asia, and America have successively felt her domination. The superiority she has long maintained has tempted her to plume herself as the mistress of the world, and to consider the rest of mankind as created for her benefit. Men admired as profound philosophers have in direct terms attributed to her inhabitants a physical superiority and have gravely asserted that all animals, and with them the human species, degenerate in America—that even dogs cease to bark after having breathed awhile in our atmosphere. Facts have too long supported these arrogant pretensions of the European. It belongs to us to vindicate the honor of the human race, and to teach that assuming brother moderation. Let Americans disdain to be the instruments of European greatness! Let the thirteen States, bound together in a strict and indissoluble Union, concur in erecting one great American system superior to the control of all transatlantic force or influence and able to dictate the terms of the connection between the old and the new world!

This, the concluding paragraph of *Federalist* 11, has long been a favorite passage of mine. In his new book, *Reconstructing America: The Symbol of America in Modern Thought*,[†] Ceaser confirms that my instincts were right. His explication of the passage, which he calls "one of the most splendid texts in American literature," makes clear precisely what is at stake

[†] Yale University Press. 292 pp. $30.00.

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in Hamilton's appeal. While Hamilton stirs up the pride of Americans, it is not a parochial or ethnocentric pride. Eurocentrism will receive its comeuppance—but not by the rise of a new centrism (for example, today's Afrocentrism). Instead, this mistress of a supposedly slavish world will be brought to recognize the brotherhood of humankind. The accomplishment of American Union will "vindicate the honor of the human race." As Ceaser explains:

> The American experiment interests the world not just because it may humble the European and cast doubt on the idea of a hierarchy of human varieties, but also because it offers an alternative account of the primary source of differentiation in human affairs. The most important differences derive not from distinctions among biological varieties of man, but from differences caused by moral and political factors. The political regime can be decisive. All peoples could take heart in an American success, because it would show what is possible for them to accomplish by political action.

THE founding of America is simultaneously a vindication of universality—the universality of a common human nature—and a vindication of difference (or particularity), since the exercise of the human capacity for freedom takes the form of national self-determination, the choice to form a distinct body politic with a distinct form of government. Ceaser stresses that implicit in the thought and action of the founders is a vindication of political science as well; it is the discipline best able to understand and guide the articulation of the universal and the particular.

The work of vindication, however, is never done. While Hamilton's spirited vision of commercial empire and ascendancy in the hemisphere has been abundantly realized, older brothers are notoriously unteachable. Instead of learning moderation, this dominating brother of ours has exchanged dismissive contempt for corrosive hatred. The contemporary version of those "profound philosophers" mentioned by Hamilton are literary critics and postmodern intellectuals. And they continue to associate America with degeneration—no longer physical, but spiritual. As Ceaser documents, they have "made the very name 'America' a symbol for that which is grotesque, obscene, monstrous, stultifying, stunted, leveling, deadening, deracinating, deforming, rootless, uncultured, and—always in quotation marks—'free.'" After turning America into Americanization, they then view this pure abstraction of theirs as all the more pernicious, because it is not limited to the actual United States. In former times, Europe considered the rest of

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mankind as created for her benefit; now, more fearful, Europe has projected this specter, "America," as a force of history bent on recreating the rest of the world (including Europe) in its own image.

For Ceaser, the task of vindicating America, and thereby the honor of the human race, must be taken up anew. This more insidious form of transatlantic influence, based on metaphor, and symbol, and ideology, must be exposed. Just as Hamilton sought to construct the real America, an America that would stand forth as a massive and irrefutable fact, Ceaser seeks to re-construct the real America—"the country where we live, work, struggle, and pray, and where we have forged a system of government that has helped to shape the destiny of the modern world." He proceeds by dismantling the metaphysical America that functions as a negative symbol in the ongoing self-criticism of modernity.

As the passage from the *Federalist Papers* indicates, the polemic symbolization of America began early with the thesis of New World degeneracy. *Reconstructing America* traces this idea from its first appearance in the thought of the Count de Buffon through its subsequent permutations. Although a variety of lesser figures assist in its peregrinations (Cornelius de Pauw, Josiah Nott, Oswald Spengler, Nikolaus Lenau, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Ernst Jünger, Alexandre Kojève, and Jean Baudrillard), the thesis has three essential formulators: Buffon in the eighteenth century, Gobineau in the nineteenth, and Heidegger in the twentieth. As Ceaser shows, none went unopposed. In each era, friends of America rose up to contest this anathematizing of the nation: first the Founders themselves, then Alexis de Tocqueville, and finally Leo Strauss. Accordingly, Ceaser's book is structured as a series of matches between the denunciators and the defenders. As a ringside commentator, Ceaser is unsurpassed. He provides concise, yet highly nuanced and immensely readable, summaries of the positions and strategies of the combatants.

What emerges very sharply is that these contests involve not just specific individuals but specific intellectual disciplines. The fighters come out of opposing corners, and as every boxing fancier knows, a good corner can make all the difference (on this analogy, "corner" would mean something like the knowledge claims and methods of each discipline). Publius, Tocqueville, and Strauss all emerge as practitioners of (or in Strauss's case a theoretical defender of) traditional political

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science—of the sort that has been around since Aristotle. A genuine political science regards political life as having a dignity and independence of its own, not resolvable into either sub- or supra-political factors (like biology, race, culture, or the movement of history). It examines "the merits and qualities of different political systems." Ceaser stresses that "this kind of knowledge has in principle the character of being helpful [note: not determinative] to those who act in political life," both statesmen and citizens. Inescapably, "political science is a moral science." And it is one we cannot do without: Its existence is "one of the conditions for maintaining freedom."

Normally, political science does not go looking for quarrels. It is content to leave rocks to geologists and rats to biologists, so long as regimes are left to it. But then along come these newfangled disciplines (often really ideologies masquerading as disciplines) which purport to replace political analysis proper with other forms of analysis, and which stake claims that undermine political science and, indeed, the possibilities of human freedom.

THE first interloper was Buffon, the founder of anthropology or ethnology. Good natural scientist that he was, Buffon was interested in classifying and accounting for species variation. Mankind was divided (and ranked) along racial lines, with recourse to climate to explain the degeneracy of non-Europeans. Climate was accorded such potency as to affect not only indigenous peoples, but immigrants as well—Europeans themselves were held to retrogress on American soil. According to Ceaser, this thesis, astonishing as it seems, "dominated advanced scientific thinking in Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century."

The founders of the United States rallied to the New World. Franklin, Adams, Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton all did their part. At stake were tangible political goods, such as diplomatic recognition, financial support, and immigration figures, as well as the intangible, but no less essential, good of self-respect. Ceaser focuses on Jefferson and Hamilton, finding Hamilton's response (in his guise as the *Federalist*'s Publius) far preferable, because it is thoroughly political. By contrast, Jefferson gave too much to the positivistic, scientific approach. In essence, he ceded it legitimacy. When it was a matter of refuting the claim that animals in America were smaller and

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feebler than their European counterparts, it was perhaps permissible to proceed by inundating Buffon with the bones and skins of American cougars. But Jefferson embraced "natural history" in its application to men as well. One can see the result in his assessment of blacks in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, a book conceived as a response to Buffon. In calling for an end to the manifest injustice of slavery, Jefferson relies on the teaching of natural rights (i.e., political science). But, in his call for the colonization of freed slaves, he turns to the new "scientific" method of natural history, which provides evidence of Negro inferiority and thus argues for the impossibility and undesirability of a biracial society.

Here is Ceaser: "The new science of natural history, [Jefferson] believes, has much to say about no less fundamental a matter than who should be members of which political communities, or about what makes a people. Natural history contains a clear inference about the question of racial mixing." Ceaser exposes the inconsistency of Jefferson's views. His attempt "to graft natural history onto natural rights" was a failure. Unfortunately, it was a failure with pernicious consequences, for Jefferson's embrace of the principle of racial hierarchy damaged the case for natural rights and "helped," writes Ceaser, "to spawn an entire school of American social science based on racialist categories and to legitimate the formation of racialist ideology." By the time of Calhoun, the self-evident truth of human equality, to which Jefferson had given immortal expression, had come to be denounced as a "self-evident lie." To be forced to lay a measure of the blame for that turn of events on the author himself is, as Ceaser acknowledges, a sad duty. But in showing the source of Jefferson's error—the theoretical error of false philosophy, not the personal error of prejudice or hypocrisy—Ceaser frees the foundations of the regime itself from the deviation of one of its founders.

IT was a Frenchman, Arthur de Gobineau, "the Father of Racism," who gave scientific racialism its classic expression in his *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*. For Gobineau, the unit of analysis was not government, but civilization, since that was the unit that allowed for the development of a "pure science" of society, by which Gobineau meant a fully explanatory and fully predictive science. "The most important thing about social life—the rise and fall of civiliza-

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tion—is not under the control of politics [which "always contains a degree of indeterminacy"] but obeys naturalistic laws of its own." The movement of history is fixed and fated, and the monocausal agent of historical change is race, or more accurately, race-mixing. Gobineau's thesis is that miscegenation spells civilizational death, and miscegenation is the inevitable result of the dialectic of conquest. History is the unfolding process of race suicide. America, which held out initial promise as a land of Aryan purity and renewal, has succumbed. With the arrival of so many ethnic and racial groups, America has melted, mongrelized, and homogenized. It prefigures the destined end of man.

Before presenting Tocqueville's refutation of Gobineau, Ceaser traces the history of ethnology in America. While Gobineau's ideas on human inequality were welcomed by both the scientists and the Southern apologists for slavery, his fatalistic historicism was rejected. The Americans, practical as ever, sought an activist racialism. I surely don't begrudge the outstanding chapter devoted to Tocqueville's rejoinder to Gobineau. (Given all the intellectual malfeasance on the part of the French, it's good to remember there was one Frenchman of good sense.) Nonetheless, it might have been nice to include something of the American responses to the Americanized versions of Gobineau. My candidates for inclusion would be Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Lincoln confronted both Calhounites, like Taney, and crypto-Calhounites, like Stephen Douglas. The example of Lincoln, moreover, shows in its full extent the sublime side of the legacy of Jefferson. It was to Jefferson that Lincoln always recurred:

> All honor to Jefferson—to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there, that to-day, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression.

From Frederick Douglass, certainly the address entitled "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered" would merit a close reading, along with "The Nation's Problem," Douglass's powerful response to those African Americans who looked to black race pride (and black power) as the answer to white race pride (and white power).

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TODAY, Gobineau's racialism appears among us as in a fun-house mirror—curiously inverted, rippled, and stretched. Here's Ceaser:

> Although classical racialism has been rejected ... racialist thinking has reemerged at the vanguard of modern intellectual discourse under the aegis of the school known as multiculturalism or the politics of difference. At the same time that this school has been an inveterate foe of classical racialist ideology, it has made racial categories the common currency of contemporary thought. While this school claims in one breath that the source of difference in society is cultural, in the next it closely links these cultures to biological, and especially racial, groups.

This latest manifestation of racialist discourse recycles the image of America as the locus of evil. Encountering yet another of these tableaux, one begins to suspect that the concept "America" is the secularization of "Hell." Intellectuals can live without the consolations of heaven, but apparently they can't do without a place to toss all that is bad. Ceaser maintains that even thought that is not racialist in character, like that of Heidegger, owes its catastrophic depiction of America to the earlier symbolization. As Ceaser explains, in a passage that provides the key to the architecture of the book, "Much of the content of symbolic America today was worked out in racialist thinking and then applied to nonracialist discussions of technology and culture." For Heidegger and his disciples, America is seen as "the land of diminished intelligence, low tastes, and cultural homogenization," not because of its climate or its racial impurity but because of its distance from "Being." Along the same lines, some people thought Hell was to be avoided because of its insalubrious climate, others because it put one in rather bad company, and yet others—the more spiritualized sort—thought it was not good because it meant separation from God. Perhaps we need to reconstruct the real Hell in order to liberate America from its assigned role as the Abyss.

Ceaser does not suggest this religious route. He sticks to the Hamiltonian path, resolutely seeking to deliver America from these foreign symbolizations and the all-too-real academic garrisons filled with collaborators. He does so wittily, learnedly, persuasively. By book's end, Ceaser has done more than bring to light the questionable genealogy of radical historicism and postmodernism; he has raised the question of their philosophic validity or invalidity. His exposé of the distempered abuse of America, stretching over three centuries, thus leads the reader to the ultimate quarry.

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Elective citizenship?

JEREMY RABKIN

WE often think of the United States as a country founded on universal principles of individual rights—on "unalienable rights endowed by [our] Creator," in the familiar phrase of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration actually begins on a different note, however. The first sentence invokes "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" not to justify individual rights but to defend national sovereignty, when "it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another." The Declaration assumes, then, that there is already some deep bond among Americans which, in spite of previous and contrary political ties, makes them a distinct "people."

Civic Ideals,[†] by Rogers Smith, focuses on the tension between these two different themes in the Declaration and in the subsequent history of constitutional thought. The book has the great merit of reminding us that affirmations of universal, individual rights do not add up to a particular country. A country is defined not by universal human rights but by its own citizenship laws. Smith, a professor of political science at Yale, sets out in this book to review the long, tangled history of American law on citizenship.

Another great merit of this book is to document how complex the meaning of citizenship did appear to earlier generations. If America is founded on the rights of the individual, should the individual have the right in American law to repudiate American citizenship and affiliate with another country? James Madison and other great figures of the Founding era thought not (at least not without special permission from Congress). It was not until well after the Civil War that American law established a relatively straightforward procedure for expatriation and then largely to facilitate agreements with Euro-

[†] Yale University Press. 719 pp. $35.00.

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pean powers, which might otherwise make awkward claims on the loyalties of their emigrants to America. Meanwhile, legislators and judges before the Civil War found it extremely difficult to work out the relation between state citizenship and federal citizenship. They worried, for example, whether a state could confer citizenship claims not recognized by the federal government or vice versa.

Smith has to be honored for the immense scholarly industry displayed in this work. It does not simply raise intriguing questions with quick sketches of abstract issues. It takes us, decade by decade, through the precise disputes about every issue it covers, describing court battles, legislative debates, and broader political controversies in relentless detail. The table of covered court cases, provided as a separate index at the end of the volume, extends through 25 double-column pages. After 500 pages of text, this history only gets up to 1912, promising to take up the rest of the story in a separate volume. *Civic Ideals* is a work of scholarly ambition on a Victorian scale.

BUT the connecting thread of argument in this history is not entirely compelling. Alongside its "civic myths" about individual rights and democratic self-government, America has always had "extensive hierarchies justified by illiberal, undemocratic traditions of ascriptive Americanism," says Smith. What he means by "ascriptive Americanism" is the notion that, whatever their own choices might be, some people are simply born with the mix of human traits needed to become good Americans: These traits can be "ascribed" to them simply by knowing their ancestry. Smith does show that, for all their liberal and democratic rhetoric, Americans have always cherished some notion of themselves as especially fitted for liberty and democracy—more so than other peoples. While ending his formal survey before the First World War, Smith continually alludes to contemporary debates—about immigration policy, affirmative action, multiculturalism, and so on—to suggest that this illiberal, undemocratic doctrine is still powerful in American thinking.

Yet on Smith's own showing, the Founders were quite favorably inclined toward immigrants. Early immigration and naturalization laws tried to restrict entry to "whites," but Congress persistently refused to define this term. By the late nineteenth century, judges sometimes found themselves confronted with complex ethnographic treatises—and crackpot ra-

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cialist science—to elucidate the category, but without improvement on the initial definition: In every case where the issue arose, judges simply decided that anyone not from Africa or East Asia should be considered "white." Even when nativists in Congress tried to restrict immigration from southern and eastern Europe, at the end of the nineteenth century, judges and immigration officials applied the laws in such a way that they were not seriously restrictive.

Lacking much support for his thesis in the law of immigration, Smith insists on devoting extensive attention to the legal status of women, the subjection of blacks, and the treatment of the Indians (invariably called "Native Americans"—somewhat ironically, given Smith's censure of anti-immigrant "nativism" among white Americans). The book also gives persistent notice to the treatment of religious minorities, business corporations, and homosexuals. The exposition thus produces a strange, leveling perspective, as issues that are totally unrelated in their actual historical context are presented as essential equivalents, because they all happen to run afoul of contemporary liberal notions of what "equality" requires. So by the rhetorical trick of classifying women and homosexuals as separate "peoples," Smith can assert that, despite its democratic self-image, America long disenfranchised the "nonwhite, nonmale, non-Christian, nonheterosexual peoples [who] have ... always added up to far more than a majority of the inhabitants of the territorial United States."

No one can deny the horror of slavery or the tragic conflicts with Indian tribes. But precisely because Smith does offer so much factual background, his own account makes it clear how strange it is to link other forms of oppression or marginalization—if that is what they are—under the same heading. The Federalists, seeking to bolster their case for national protection of individual rights, linked the new national authority with mystical, vaguely religious appeals to common ancestry and shared, providential dispensations. Followers of Jefferson responded by casting themselves as defenders of religious liberty, of immigration—and of slavery. In the aftermath of the Civil War, Republicans championed national power to protect the rights of former slaves in the South and then supported the most brutal exercises of national power against Indians in the Plains and Chinese laborers on the Pacific coast. Meanwhile, as the movement for women's suffrage gained momentum in the late nineteenth century, it allied itself with Protestant traditions of abstemiousness—and presented votes for

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women as a hedge against the heavy drinking of Catholic immigrants. Democrats, on the other hand, waving the banner of states' rights, defended racial oppression in the South while remaining loud champions of immigrants and Catholic minorities in the northern cities—again in the name of tolerance for local differences.

Perhaps there are threads of consistency in the different party positions. Smith himself, however, gives more attention to the electoral coalitions and political calculations that drove different political leaders to emphasize "liberal, consensual" themes in one setting and more exclusive national traditions in another. In the end, these different appeals to inherited or traditional ways do not seem to add up to a continuous, coherent, or meaningful political doctrine. It is certainly true that liberal rhetoric was often countered with racialist or "ascriptive" rhetoric. It is also true that rhetoric about property rights was often countered by rhetoric appealing to notions of charity and togetherness—or simply to envy and resentment. Smith's book is no more persuasive in its central thesis than a work that might string together such examples to assert a "tradition" of economic collectivism.

IN the background of Smith's story are two looming facts, neither of which are given much attention in *Civic Ideals*. The first is that not all cultures are equally supportive of liberal democracy. Until quite recent decades, English-speaking countries were almost unique in the world in combining parliamentary government and the rule of law with long-term political stability. It was quite reasonable for earlier generations of Americans to see some link between the strength of Anglo-Protestant culture and the survival of liberal democratic institutions, however crude or silly they may have been at times in entangling this concern with vague notions of genetic determinism. Smith almost entirely ignores this fact, which allows him to suggest that current concerns about excessive immigration or multiculturalism must reflect a sinister, racialist outlook.

The second fact in the background is that no country ever has, or ever could, detach citizenship from accidents of birth. To cut all links between citizenship and "ascriptive" characteristics, we would have to determine U.S. citizenship by a global competition or a global lottery. We would have to say that a billion Chinese, for example, should have equal chances with newborn children of Americans in deciding who will make up

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the next generation of U.S. citizens. Of course, Smith does not advocate this, but his starting premise of distrust for all "ascriptive characteristics" makes nationality itself seem morally questionable. Thus he ends his book by urging that we reconceive the nation not as a "family"—which has, he says, disturbing implications of blood ties, not to mention of "patriarchy"—but rather as a sort of "political party," held together by a voluntary embrace of shared ideals. He argues that this image is preferable, precisely because everyone acknowledges that party loyalty—partisanship—should not be taken to extremes.

Of course, "America" is more than a collection of people who live in a particular territory. But Smith's formulas suggest that the country will have to be defined either by ethnocentric chauvinism or a disembodied set of political ideals—and he insists the latter is the only proper choice. Aristotle noted that it is characteristic of democracy to identify the country with the people, rather than the regime. In that sense, Smith's desire to define America in more ideological terms might be seen as rather aristocratic. In the name of suppressing "ascriptive hierarchy," he proclaims a vision of the country so ethereal that very few ordinary Americans—say, few Americans without Ph.D.'s—would find it compelling.

EARLY in the book, Smith protests the oddity of the term "naturalization," since it implies that some people (the native born) are more "naturally" Americans than others (immigrants). But isn't it, after all, the natural thing for children to follow in the path of their parents? And isn't there, then, some natural link between the idea of family—the home where, as Robert Frost says, "they have to take you in"—and the idea of nationality? How far would we really want to go in saying that people with politically incorrect ideas are not true Americans (or are "unAmerican"), even if born here?

Civic Ideals poses some challenging questions about the relation between liberal democratic ideals and nationality. It provides an abundance of historical materials to assist scholars who want to think through these questions with more care. But the book is unlikely to provide much intellectual weight to the extreme version of contemporary liberalism that Smith himself endorses.

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Reagan versus the intellectuals

WILFRED M. MCCLAY

As Samuel Johnson once remarked, we more often need to be reminded than to be instructed. That pithy observation helps us take the proper measure of Dinesh D'Souza's newest book, *Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader*.† It must be conceded at the outset that, from a strictly scholarly or historical standpoint, this is not a trailblazing book. There are no new discoveries here, no startlingly original interpretations, few fresh facts. Nor is such a slim volume meant to preempt or compete with the massive authorized Reagan biography currently being written by Edmund Morris, or even with the earlier biographical efforts of Lou Cannon, Laurence Barrett, Ronnie Dugger, Garry Wills, et al., or the score-settling memoirs too numerous to mention. Indeed, given its light and accessible touch, a touch reminiscent of the book's subject, it is more like an extended essay than a standard biographical or historical study.

And yet, D'Souza has made an extremely useful contribution not only to our understanding of Ronald Reagan and his presidency but of the American past and present. He has accomplished this by doing what historians do best, when they are on their game: presenting the flow of ideas and events in a larger perspective that reveals their ultimate direction and deeper meaning. If his book is more a boldly stroked sketch than a detailed portrait, so much the better.

Such a book may be especially necessary to redirect our thinking in the case of Reagan, a president who, from the start, has elicited an appalling level of unconcealed loathing from the liberal scribes who keep the tablets of our civilization and who had already drafted the "story" on him long before it

† The Free Press. 292 pp. $25.00.

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had run its remarkable course. Even before the 1980s were finished, catch phrases such as "decade of greed," "smoke and mirrors," and "new Gilded Age," along with images of an avaricious, aggressive, corrupt, ignorant, and bumbling administration, had become engraved in the pages of standard history textbooks and fixed in the minds of most educated Americans as the principal "story" of the era. So effective has this spinning of the past been, with its relentless minimizing of Reagan's truly astonishing record, that even his fellow Republicans, beginning with the "kinder and gentler" George Bush, have come to accept it, if only by silent assent.

Hence Reagan, the bold and canny politician whose opponents always underestimated him to their later regret, the winner of the Cold War and restorer of national self-confidence and economic health, is in danger of being underestimated by history. D'Souza wrote his book to remind us that it was Reagan, not his clever detractors, who turned out to be right about the vulnerability of the Soviet Union, right about the preconditions of economic recovery, right about the resiliency of the American spirit, right about everything that mattered, about which the "wise men" were consistently wrong, in ways they have never fully acknowledged.

ONE of the most satisfying features of D'Souza's book is its collection of quotations from learned fools, all of whom were certain, with an arrogance bordering on contempt, that they understood the world better than a dim bulb like Reagan. We are treated, for example, to the collective wisdom of Seweryn Bialer, John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Paul Samuelson, James Reston, Lester Thurow, Strobe Talbott, and Stephen Cohen, all of whom lectured the public about the growing strength of the Soviet economic and political system in the early 1980s. All of these men concluded that the Soviet regime was much too firmly entrenched to be effectively challenged. Those who thought otherwise, as Reagan did, were (in the words of Schlesinger) "wishful thinkers" who were only "kidding themselves," and indeed, were endangering the very survival of the planet. When the Soviet Union collapsed a few years later, they were of course stunned. Schlesinger marvelled that "no one foresaw these changes," conveniently forgetting that Reagan had foreseen them and had been ridiculed for predicting them.

Again and again, D'Souza reminds us that Reagan was the target of a level of venom that we have not seen before or

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since, and that all his major achievements had to surmount a level of opposition, particularly from intellectual elites, that frequently lapsed into the worst sort of mendacity, name-calling, and wanton destructiveness. More importantly, he reminds us of Reagan's response to such abuse: a combination of tenacity, optimism, and jaunty humor that proved largely unstoppable, precisely because it contrasted so sharply with the bitter bile of his opposition.

But this might seem to imply that Reagan's success was a question of style, the triumph of amiable temperament over feeble intellect. That is a view that D'Souza rightly rejects. Such a view is merely a variant on the theme of condescension, hiding behind a cynical view of modern American politics as stage-managed unreality. It was not only the style but also the content of his policies, and the values they embodied, that made him so successful.

An excellent example of these qualities can be found in D'Souza's account of Reagan's decision to deploy Pershing and Tomahawk missiles in Europe to counter the threat of Soviet SS-20s. It is easy to forget the courage Reagan showed, in the face of a vast international peace movement, and much domestic uneasiness, in following through with the decision to deploy the missiles. It was a key move, in retrospect, toward the ultimate defeat of the Soviet Union. Perhaps even more controversial, and (we now know) just as consequential, was his insistence upon moving ahead with the development of a strategic missile defense, a move that apparently unnerved Soviet leaders even more than it did nervous American pundits.

Equally illuminating is D'Souza's reconsideration of Reagan's domestic record. D'Souza records the sophisticated resignation and impotence that passed for economic wisdom in the stagflation-ridden 1970s. Michael Blumenthal, Jimmy Carter's treasury secretary, dithered that the era's double-digit inflation was "caused by a number of factors that act together and interact in strange and mysterious ways," while Lester Thurow opined, that to cure inflation, the United States would need "some good luck." It was widely believed that the U.S. economy could no longer compete with the fearsome Japanese unless it adopted an "industrial policy," formulated by just such savants as Blumenthal and Thurow. Reagan had the temerity to think the nation's problems could be solved, without reversion to a centrally directed economy, through a combination of intelli-

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gent monetary policies and bold tax reforms. Again Reagan had to brave cheerfully the howls and jibes of his "betters," including opportunists in his own party. One remembers how badly undercut Reagan was by his own budget director, David Stockman.

As this example should suggest, it is not only the Democratic or liberal opposition that comes away from D'Souza's treatment with egg on its face. No political or ideological faction is spared. The impulse to underestimate Reagan has been almost universal. There is hardly a major conservative figure that does not turn up in these pages, saying something embarrassing or dismissive about Reagan. One emotion clearly motivating the composition of this book was anger, directed at Reagan's ungrateful and improvident political heirs, who seem determined to fritter away his legacy without deigning even to acknowledge it.

ONE hopes this book will help rectify that problem somewhat, and awaken a sense of gratitude that Reagan clearly deserves. And perhaps, too, some will hear in this book an echo of the familiar words from Reagan's most famous movie: *Knute Rockne, All American*, where he played the dying George Gipp. Present-day Republicans could do far worse than concentrate their wandering and feckless minds on the worthwhile task of winning one for the Gipper.

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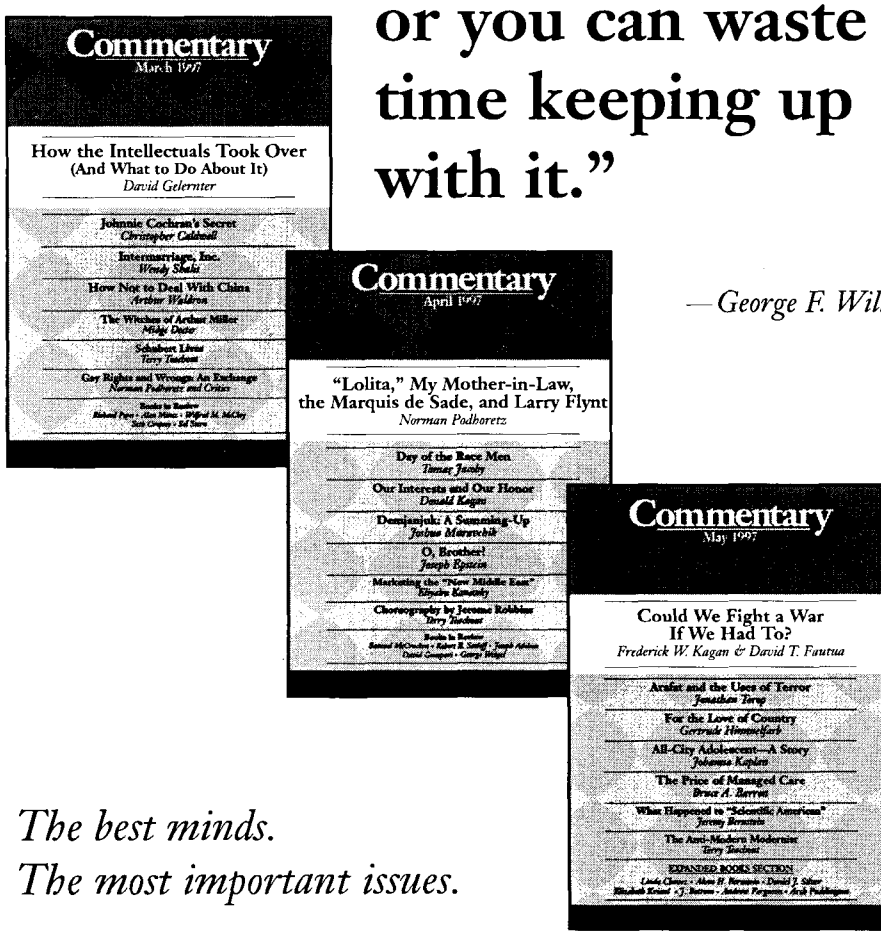

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